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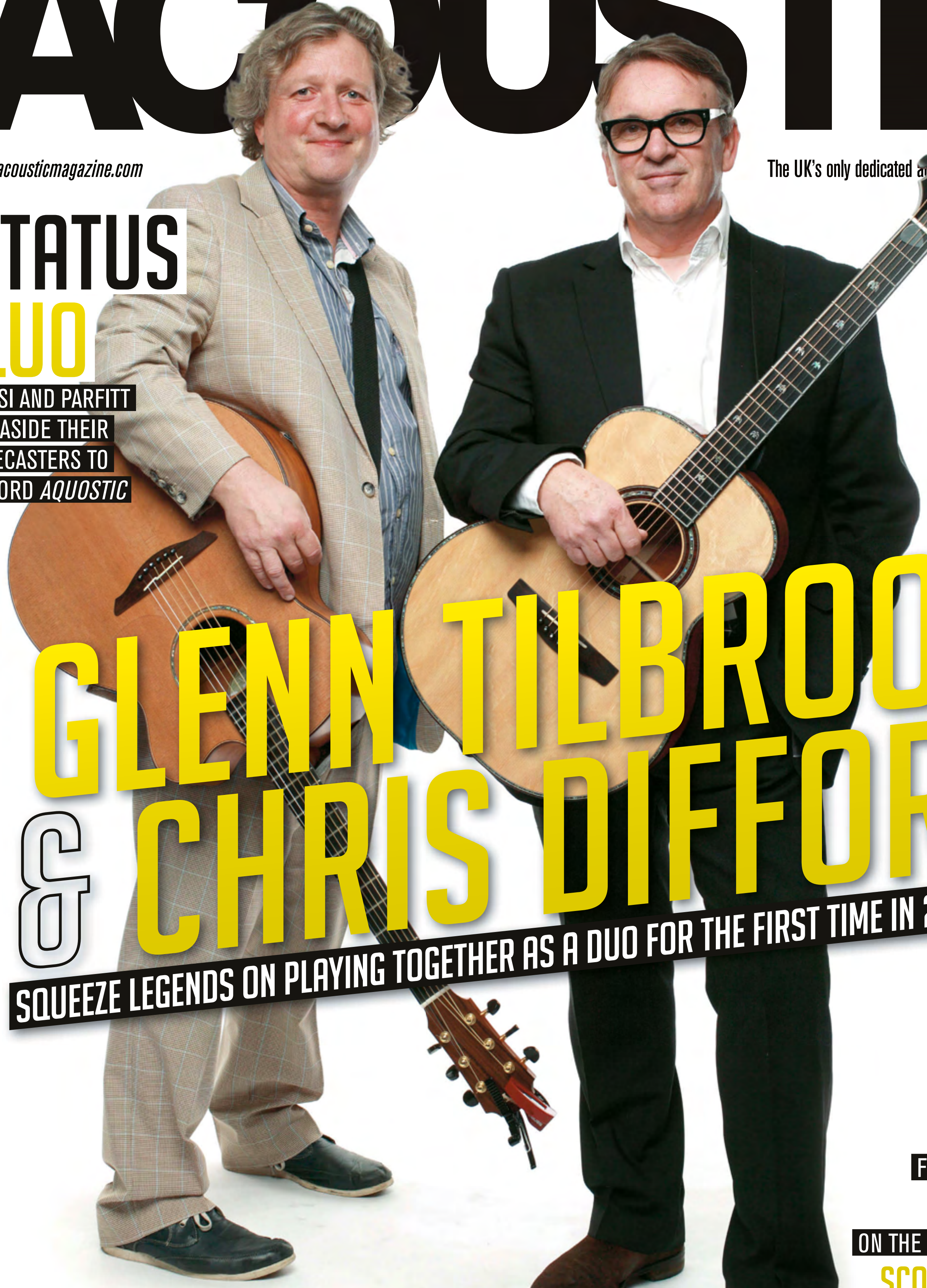

STATUS QUO

ROSSI AND PARFITT SET ASIDE THEIR TELECASTERS TO RECORD *AQUOSTIC*

GLENN TILBROOK & CHRIS DIFFORD

SQUEEZE LEGENDS ON PLAYING TOGETHER AS A DUO FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 20 YEARS

LAGS 2014

FULL SHOW REPORT

ROO PANES

ON THE ART OF SIMPLICITY

SCOTT MATTHEWS

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

MICHAEL HEDGES

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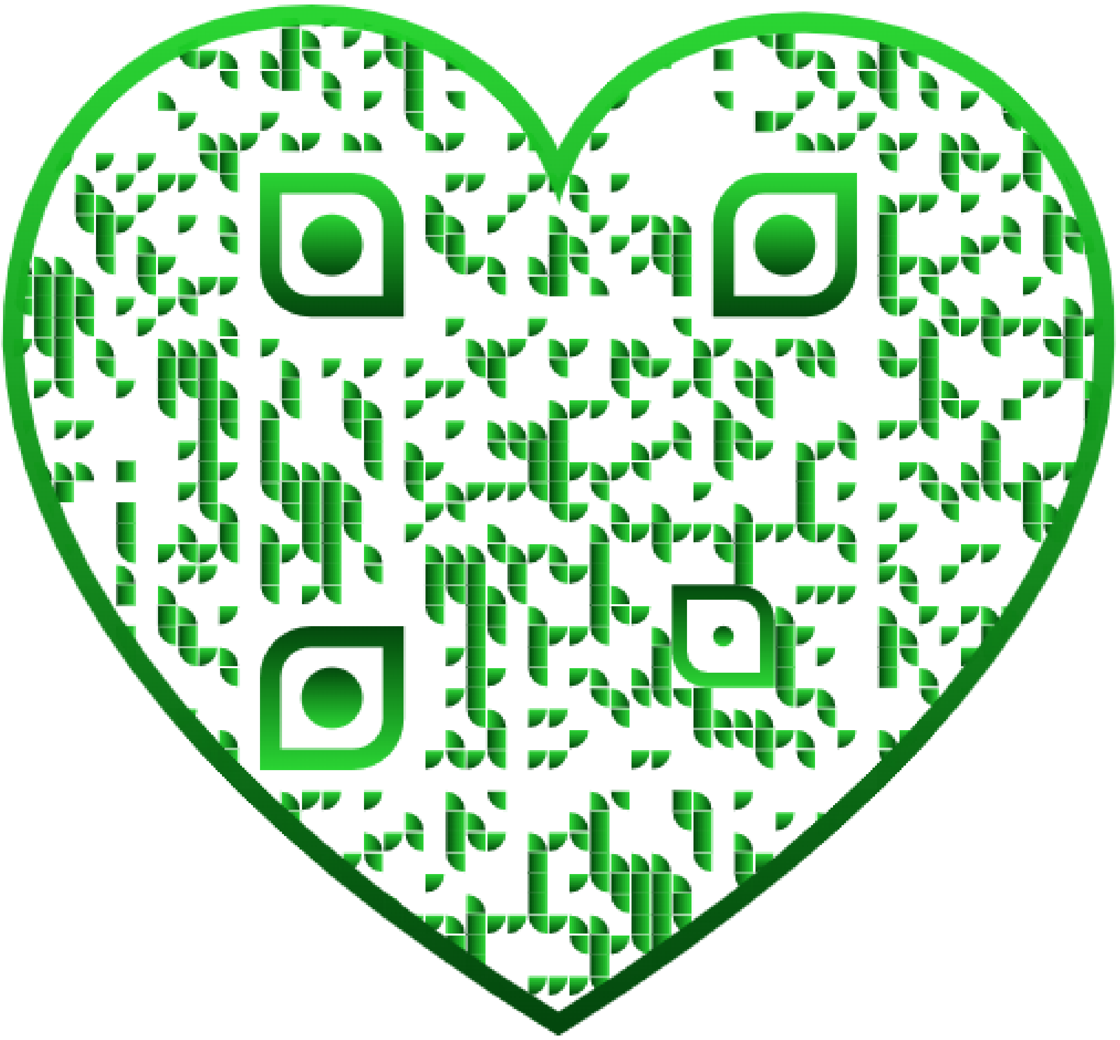
GEAR ON TEST: LAME HORSE INSTRUMENTS, SHADOW ELECTRONICS, AVALON, GODIN, FRESHMAN



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A LITTLE WORD

Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford represent one of the finest songwriting partnerships the UK has ever produced. Whether it's the harmonies on tracks like 'Take Me I'm Yours', or the genius of the songwriting on 'Labelled With Love', 'Up The Junction' and 'Cool For Cats', in the early 80s, Squeeze were the perennial chroniclers of the average bloke's romantic ventures.

It's almost impossible not to sing, "I never thought it would happen with me and the girl from Clapham…" in Tilbrook's cockney accent when thinking about Squeeze, so it was a pleasure to stumble upon Difford and Tilbrook backstage at LAGS using 'Up The Junction' to tune their guitars and sound check. With Difford's wit etched into Tilbrook's melodies and arrangements, there are few other players who match these guys, musically; two of Britain's finest purveyors of popular music – there, I said it! As I leave them to tune up and arrange their guitars for their headline set, I hear Tilbrook start, "She unscrews the top of her new whisky bottle…" – hit after hit they come.

Tilbrook and Difford took to the LAGS stage last month to remind us just how massive they were from 1979 through to 1987, and how influential they continue to be as a songwriting tour de force. The Lennon and McCartney comparisons don't seem so crazy now… As they prepare to play a run of sold out shows for the At Odds Couple Tour, we sat down with them to talk about performing together as duo for the first time in 20 years – as well as their epic 40-year career in the music industry. See what they had to say over on page 48.

Where do you start with Status Quo? What can you say about them that's not already been said? Well, turns out, this – they're releasing an acoustic album called *Aquostic (Stripped Bare)*. Oh, and they did just that – stripped bare, minus a few strategically placed guitars – for the cover of the album, shot by Bryan Adams (yup, that one). For the first time in their career they've ditched the Telecasters and picked up a selection of acoustics to rerecord a load of their hits in a less rockin' fashion. Joel McIver's got all the info over on page 42.

I'm going to admit it, at first I wasn't really drawn to the Lame Horse Lorena we have over on page 56 – but then I picked it up and I'm now wondering how to get £5k together to buy it. It's Chris and Jeremy Jenkins' take on vintage inspired designs – particularly from Gibson – and I just adore that headstock. It'd be the perfect guitar for a doting singer-songwriter (other styles accepted, of course) wanting something a little different.

Check out what went down at this year's London Acoustic Guitar Show over on page 16 – from James Dean Bradfield right through to Tony McManus. Enjoy the issue.

Guy Little
Editor

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For the first time in 20 years, Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford will be heading out on a run of sold out UK shows – the At Odds Couple tour – to celebrate 40 years of making music together. *Acoustic* caught up with two of the coolest cats in the business at the London Acoustic Guitar Show to talk about songwriting, fame after four decades, and the state of the music industry.

RETUNE YOUR EARS

10 Listen to something new, with Paul Strange

42 STATUS QUO

Status Quo are back, we tell you, back, with an acoustic album called *Aquostic*. Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt wax lyrical with Joel McIver on the "Rolls-Royce of acoustics", the perils of playing too hard – and "phallic" album titles...

36 SCOTT MATTHEWS

Scott Matthews is a rare mix. He's a virtuosic guitarist, a fine singer, and a gifted songwriter to boot. His songs inhabit a territory that has commonality with Nick Drake, and also with Jeff Buckley, but he's no copycat – his music is all his own.

34 ROO PANES

Roo Panes is a singer-songwriter from Dorset with a penchant for writing songs inspired by life's tales and wonders, resonating with universal truths and wonders. Armed with his 12-string Taylor, we caught up with Panes as he was about to debut album.

30 MARK NEVIN

Mark Nevin rose to fame as the songwriter and guitarist with his band Fairground Attraction, but he's now released his solo album *Beautiful Guitars* featuring just that – thanks to luthier Alister Atkin and artist Vic Lee.

28 JAKE ISAAC

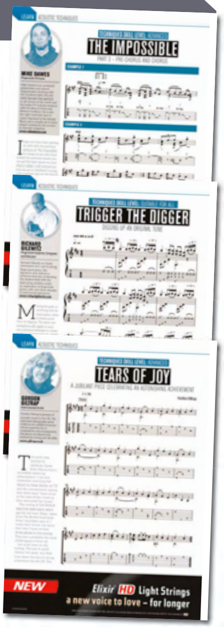
Although he may be unfamiliar to some readers, singer-songwriter Jake Isaac is creating quite a buzz right now. He possesses all the credible hallmarks of a rising star with his strong songwriting prowess, a distinctive voice, and nimble, emotive guitar.

GUITAR TECHNIQUES

Improve your playing with our techniques section...

With 10 pages of different level-specific techniques, whether you're a novice or an expert our columns have something for everyone.

THE EXPERTS



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'Tears of Joy' – a jubilant celebration of achievement

SPECIAL FEATURES

16 LONDON CALLING: LAGS 2014
The London Acoustic Guitar Show took place in association with *Acoustic* magazine on 13-14 September with a bit of a twist – another floor for the electric brethren, Electric Live. We sent Andy Hughes into the midst of the LAGS to report on the new gear, the live performances and, of course, the green room exclusives. Here's what went down...

78 THE WORKSHOP: MIKE VANDEN
As well as building flat top acoustics, archtops, and mandolins from his workshop in the highlands of Scotland, Mike is also credited as the inventor of the Rare Earth (originally called the Mimesis) pickup system used by people such as Ben Howard and Thomas Leeb.

86 IN THE LOOP
In this month's column, we're using alternate tunings as a creative tool. Drop D tuning is one of the most popular to experiment with. Alternate tunings aren't just for fingerstylists, Neil Young (think 'Harvest Moon'), the Allman Brothers Band (think 'Midnight Rider'), among others, use drop D tuning widely.

84 COLLECTORS' COLUMN
Paul's vintage instrument round-up from the London Acoustic Guitar Show – including a rare 1938 Oahu jumbo guitar.

GEAR REVIEWS

Acoustic keeps you up to date with what's hot and what's not in our gear reviews section.

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Small body, big tone – meet the Lame Horse LH14 Lorena. Richard Thomas takes a look at a hand built offering from father and son team, Chris and Jeremy Jenkins of Lame Horse Instruments.

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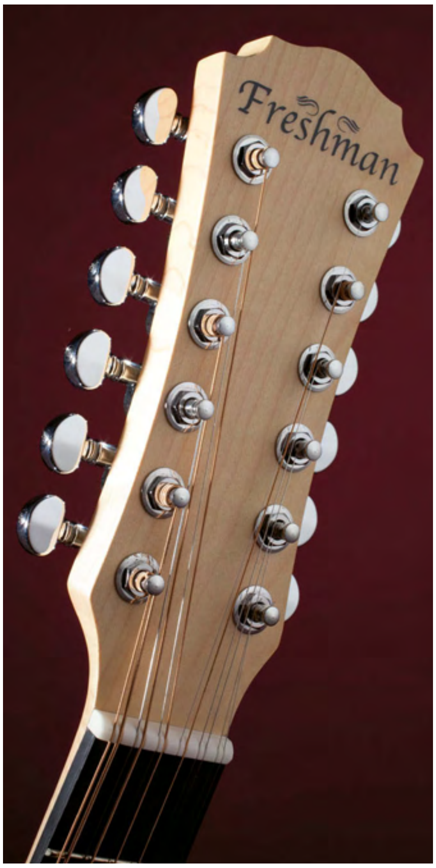
Shadow introduces a soundhole pickup with a built-in wireless transmitter – David Mead gives it the runaround...

62 AVALON D300A
Avalon revisit the glorious past with a slope-shouldered dread from their Americana line of instruments... David Mead practises his bluegrass licks.

66 GODIN MULTIAC ACS-SA
A marriage of nylon strung acoustic and guitar synth, the Multiac might be an unholy chimera or a wonderful hybrid. Sam Wise finds out which.

70 FRESHMAN FA1AM12 & AP3JEM12
A brace of Freshman 12-Strings unleash their sonorous enchantment upon reviewer David Mead...



NEWS DESK

ACOUSTIC BRINGS YOU ALL OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ACOUSTIC MUSIC.

TAYLOR LAUNCH 2014 LIMITED EDITIONS

Three exotic tonewoods feature in this year's autumn special editions

Taylor Guitars has released a new batch of limited edition acoustics for the autumn. The Fall Limited Edition series is made using three exotic tonewoods: blackwood, blackheart sassafras, and koa.

Blackheart sassafras is a Tasmanian tonewood featuring a mix of blonde colour with dark, dramatic striping. Paired with a Sitka spruce top on the 700 series, these limteds feature Taylor's Advanced Performance bracing and the use of protein glue, designed to boost the warmth and projection.

Taylor's chief luthier and design, Andy Powers said: 'It's got some of the dry, woody response of walnut or mahogany, with some of the note separation and focus of maple or myrtle, with a more articulated high-end overtone series like rosewood.'

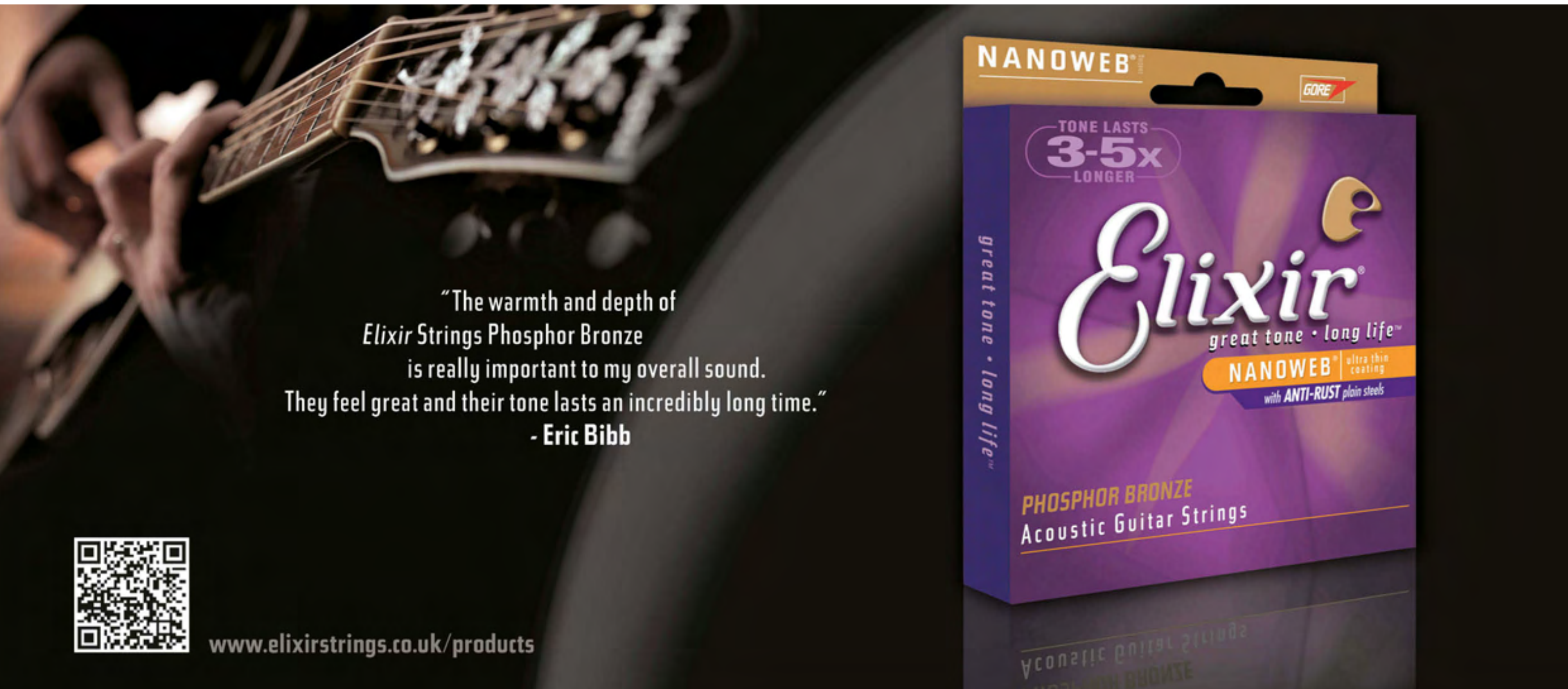
The 700 series models will also have Indian rosewood binding and backstrap, rosewood top trim, an abalone rosette, and mother-of-pearl Heritage Diamond fretboard inlays. Three models are available – the Grand Concert 712e-12-Fret FLTD, the Grand Auditorium 714ce-FLTD, and the Grand Orchestra 718e-FLTD.

The 500 Series Limiteds feature blackwood – another Tasmanian tonewood – with tonal properties said to blend midrange focus with top-end shimmer. There are five Taylor body shapes available using this wood for the autum limiteds – the Dreadnought 510e-FLTD, the Grand Concert 512ce-12-Fret FLTD, the Grand Auditorium 514ce-FLTD, the Grand Symphony 516ce-FLTD, and the Grand Orchestra 518e-FLTD. Topped with Sitka spruce, the models feature neo-vintage appointments, including a shaded edgeburst body and neck, ivoroid binding, and ivoroid century inlays.

A firm player favourite, Hawaiian koa, returns to the Fall Limiteds with a pair of all-koa 300 Series guitars (Grand Auditorium 324ce-FLTD and Grand Symphony 326ce-FLTD) and the GS Mini-e Koa. The 300 Series Limiteds feature an all-satin finish, Italian acrylic dot inlays, and a three-ring rosette. The GS Mini-e Koa features layered koa back and sides, a solid koa top, and an upgrade to Taylor's ES-T pickup.

The 2014 autumn limited editions are available from all good Taylor dealers.

For more information, head to their website: ***www.taylorguitars.com***



REGISTRY OF GUITAR TUTORS ANNOUNCE NEW UKULELE SYLLABUS

Exams to be held at more than 250 locations over the world for solo players as well as ensembles

If you're passionate about the ukulele, you can now take a graded exam to demonstrate your abilities, thanks to the Registry of Guitar Tutors.

The RGT has launched the first ever series of Ofqual-regulated exams for ukulele. This new syllabus runs alongside the RGT's acoustic guitar syllabus and helps to provide formal recognition of the ukulele.

The RGT exams are split into five different sections with a wealth of options open to you. This means you can focus on what you enjoy playing most, or push yourself into some more challenging territory. The sections are: rhythm study, performance, free choice specialism, prepared accompaniment, and musicianship.

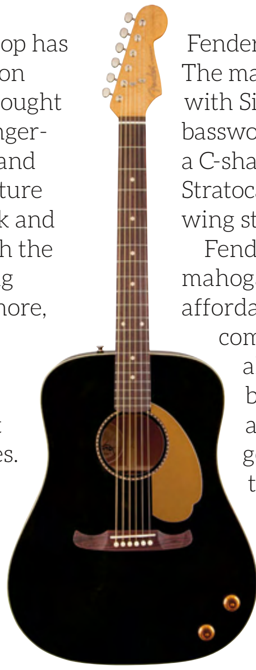
RGT ukulele exams can be taken at over 250 exam centres across the world and are available for individuals, as well as an ensemble syllabus for ukulele groups.

Phil Doleman, ukulele player and educator, said about the new exams: 'What most impresses me about the RGT ukulele exams is that care has been taken to allow students to focus on what ukulele playing means to them. On top of that, it's possible to enter groups – not just individuals.'

For more information, visit their website: ***www.rgt.org***

FENDER'S ACOUSTIC CUSTOM SHOP TO RELEASE TOM PETTY DREADNOUGHT

US brand also announce the affordable Piha'ea all-mahogany ukulele



Fender's acoustic custom shop has announced the limited edition Tom Petty Kingman dreadnought – crafted with the famed singer-songwriter's personal style and specs, and bearing his signature on the back of the headstock and on the soundhole label. With the Heartbreakers, the Traveling Wilburys, on his own and more, Petty has crafted infectious hits for five decades, and the Tom Petty Kingman is a tribute to one of rock's most enduringly acclaimed figures.

The body, in nitro gloss black, is elegantly adorned with a gold pickguard and checkerboard rosette on the AA Sitka spruce top, which also features Fender's "forward-X" red spruce bracing. The mahogany back and sides are crafted with Sitka spruce back bracing and basswood kerfing. The maple neck has a C-shaped profile, topped by a '62-style Stratocaster headstock with vintage-style wing string trees.

Fender has also released a new all-mahogany ukulele – the Piha'ea. An affordable instrument that doesn't compromise on tone, it features an all-mahogany body, black neck and body binding, rosewood bridge, and Fender headstock with open-gear tuners. For a limited time, the Piha'ea Soprano model is available in an all-natural finish or a version with a red screen graphic of a hula girl. For more information and pricing, visit: ***www.fender.com***

LATHKILL ANNOUNCE THE MUSIC OF GORDON GILTRAP PROJECT

Sheet music specialist to publish Giltrap's back catalouge with tracks spanning his 40-year career

Several years ago, the UK-based specialist guitar music publisher, Lathkill Music, began a project with the legendary guitarist Gordon Giltrap to publish all the guitar compositions he has written during his 40 years as a performer. So far, Giltrap's career has resulted in two best-selling albums.

The compositions are now to be available as single items in PDF format which can be downloaded from the Lathkill website. At the time of writing there are 34 titles available with many more to come over the next few months. Anyone interested should go to: ***www.lathkillmusic.co.uk***

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RETUNE YOUR EARS

Presenting new, interesting or alternative musicians. Listen to something different. **With Paul Strange**

MATT TURK
STYLE… (FOLK)

I'm a rootsy folk-rocker, playing American music with world influences and flavours. A singer-songwriter, guitarist, mandolinist, bandleader and solo performer, I'm an American working musician. My latest album – *Cold Revival* – is my fifth solo album. I look inward to create work that's real for me and that other people can relate to on topics like relationships, loss and the redeeming power of love. I enjoy listening to the entire album. 'Say You'll Live' gives me chills. 'Battle Song' brings a smile. 'Midnight On The Water' relaxes me. 'When A Boy' is uplifting. 'Cracked Egg' is rollicking. When gigging, I play a Morgan Monroe, acoustic parlour-style guitar, brown with a tan sunburst, and a Fishman pickup in the bridge. It feels yummy and plays country blues fingerpicking as well as flat-picking real well. I put it, and my mandolin – an Epiphone teardrop – through the LR Baggs Para Acoustic DI. Other instruments I play include a Tacoma classical guitar, a 1967 Guild Starfire electric, a 1930s Gibson Junior banjo and a 1970s Fender Fullerton CA lap steel. I compose a lot on an acoustic, finding it comfortable and familiar. I picked up guitar in first grade. My older brother played and there was one in the house to pick up. I've always combined lessons with self-teaching and I still take lessons and work a lot on my own. My influences include Jerry Garcia, Jimmy Page, and Pete Seeger. Currently, I'm touring in north-east America and planning a tour in Colorado.

www.turktunes.com

MIKE SEAL
STYLE… (SINGER-SONGWRITER)

Bernie Maguire and I met in 2010 when she advertised for a guitarist. It worked immediately. She has a wonderful voice that combines fragility and strength. We also have similar outlooks politically, and on life, but with enough differences to make for creativity. Our group, Red Bird Sky, is an Americana/folk/Celtic crossover. We write songs on difficult topics such as domestic violence, sexuality, politics and mental health. Our second album, *The Unravelling*, has richer arrangements than our first, and we've developed musically and lyrically. Most of the songs are about unravelling and falling apart, but then pulling one's self together again, acknowledging, coming to terms with and re-incorporating those issues. Lindisfarne's Rod Clements plays dobro, baritone guitar and mandolin on the album. I play a mahogany Martin 000-15. I love the richness that mahogany gives. I DI through a Fishman Rare Earth pickup, which gives a consistent sound. I also put it through a Fishman Jerry Douglas Aura pedal and then into a Fender Acoustasonic amp. I always write on an acoustic. Bernie might have a few lines, chords, or a topic, or I might have a chord sequence. People and human experiences influence me. Musically, I have wide tastes, from jazz to country via hip-hop and punk. I'm mainly self-taught and have always been a fingerstyle player. Nick Drake is a definite influence, as are John Martyn and Paul Weller. We have gigs coming up supporting Rod Clements as well as other gigs in Manchester at the end of November and hopefully London soon.

www.redbirdsky.com

SUNJAY BRAYNE
STYLE… (SINGER-SONGWRITER)

It was an honour to be nominated for the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award in 2012. Within a year I was doing gigs when I should have been doing schoolwork. I play a Cort Parkwood series guitar. It's a semi-acoustic, cutaway dreadnought, with a built-in Fishman preamp. It goes through a Boss Vibrato pedal and then an Orchid DI out to the PA. I've been playing the Cort for more than 10 years, but I have recently added a Collings to my guitar collection. I use standard tuning, but I venture into open D, G and C, plus drop D. I use a thumb pick and two metal finger picks. After a year of classical lessons, I self-taught. I'm playing around 100 gigs this year so my fingers are in pretty good shape. My new album, *Sunjay*, was a massive learning process for me. It was lots of fun, which I think is the main thing you need when recording. Finding Dan Walsh by chance in the bar above the studio and getting him to play on a few tracks was cool. My favourite track is 'You Don't Mess Around With Jim'. It reflects my personality because I don't like being too serious. Overall, I'm extremely pleased with the album. Eddy Morton did a fantastic job producing it. It's the perfect progression from the live album I released last year. I've just started getting songs together for my next album, which I hope to release next autumn. I have a few November gigs, then I'm working on a new project in January and February, touring in March and April and playing one-off dates and festivals during the summer months. The secret of good playing? Groove.

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SUPPORT MY MUSIC TEACHER

Did you have a teacher who sparked an interest in a subject for you? Who went that extra mile and was so absorbed and enthused by their subject that you couldn't help but be in awe of them? Can you still remember how you couldn't wait for their lesson?

If you talk to most professional musicians, this is how they will speak about their music teachers. One inspirational teacher might be the reason they became a musician in the first place. Many more may have encouraged and supported them along the way. You, reading this, might be the inspired student, the inspiring teacher or more likely – both.

The reality of most musicians' working lives is that they will teach as part of their career. Many say it is one of the most rewarding things they do. These musicians are creating and inspiring the next generation of musicians to perform – and perhaps to teach.

It feels like there are more opportunities to learn to play instruments than ever before. Yet there are reports of a real crisis in music education. Many music teachers are leaving or losing their jobs. College and university courses are closing down across the UK. The real opportunities, and with them idea that "professional musician" is an actual job people do, are in the hands of the privileged few.

WHY IS THAT?

Funding is the main reason. Cuts are affecting music education provision from pre-school right up to colleges and universities. Schools are encouraged to be more like businesses. But making money from education is rarely a healthy proposition, especially in music education, which has high delivery costs including expensive instruments and highly trained professionals.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

Teachers are losing their jobs, earning less, and losing rights we take for granted like sick pay. They have to pay for the rooms they are asked to teach in, or pass that cost on to the children they teach. Morale is understandably low.

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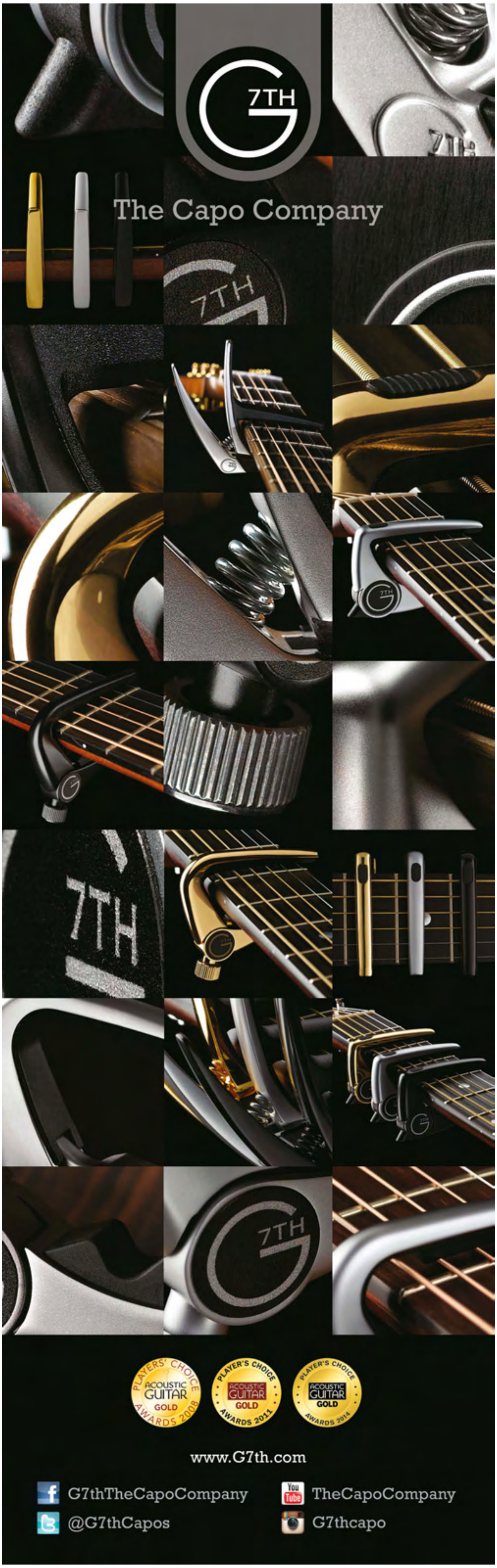

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8310 - Levin SW203Acoustic Guitar in Natural
10905 - Martin 00018, Inc Hard Case
13064 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Secondhand
6554 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Natural
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
6010 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Natural
9342 - Northwood M80 12
13133 - Ozark Grand Auditorium 3760 Deluxe, Used
10225 - Seagull Coastline S6 Folk Cedar Acoustic
11149 - Seagull Excursion Natural Folk SG
11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG
11162 - Seagull Maritime SWS Mahogany High-Gloss
10230 - Seagull S6 Original
13474 - Tanglewood DBT DLX F DAO Acoustic
13291 - Tanglewood TPEFLS
9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XFM Super Jumbo
9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought
13289 - Tanglewood TWJD Dreadnought Acoustic
4419 - Vintage V1100N Dreadnought, Natural
13081 - Vintage V2000MGG Acoustic Guitar
13268 - Vintage V300 Mahogany Series Acoustic
13269 - Vintage V400CSB, Cherry Sunburst
13270 - Vintage V400MP Maple Acoustic Guitar
10929 - Vintage VE2000DLX Gordon Giltrap
13272 - Vintage VJ100N XL Jumbo Series, Natural
8304 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic, Sunburst
10932 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Redburst
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
12428 - Yairi Rag 65 Small Parlour Guitar
5632 - Yamaha F310 Dreadnought, Natural
9182 - Yamaha FG700MS Acoustic Guitar, Natural
6964 - Yamaha FG700S Acoustic Guitar
13387 - Yamaha FG720S Yamaha FG720S
13308 - Yamaha FG720S Dreadnought Brown SB
8019 - YAMAHA FG730S Electro Acoustic Guitar

6 String Electro Acoustics

8035 - Breedlove AJ250/SF Plus Electro Acoustic
10284 - Breedlove Cascade C25/CRE Electro
10285 - Breedlove Cascade OM/CRe Soft Cutaway
10287 - Breedlove Passport C250/COe Electro
10978 - Breedlove Passport C250CMe Electro, Nat
10292 - Breedlove Passport Plus C250/SBe Electro
10294 - Breedlove Retro D/ERe with LR Baggs
10976 - Breedlove Revival DSMe Electro Sunburst
10918 - Breedlove USA Gold D/SRE
10069 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Black
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
10071 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Red
10070 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Sunburst
4769 - EKO Ranger EQ Vintage Series, Black
9179 - Epiphone Dave Navarro "Jane"
11134 - Epiphone PR4E Ltd Electro Acoustic Pack
10987 - Faith FECN Neptune Baby Jumbo Electro Bk
12358 - Faith FKV Venus Concert Cutaway/Electro
9543 - Faith FSCETB Saturn Dreadnought Electro
13216 - Faith Jupiter Jumbo, Secondhand
12360 - Fender Avril Lavigne Newporter
6930 - Fender Telecoustic Electro Acoustic Bk
12671 - Fender Tony Alva Sonoran SCE,
13169 - Gibson LC1 Cascade, V. Sunburst, Used
10143 - Gibson LG2 American Eagle
10419 - Gibson Southern Jumbo Electro, Sunburst
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural
5602 - K Yairi WY1 Natural
9552 - LAG T300AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
9551 - Lag T300DCE Electro Acoustic Guitar
9547 - Lag T400DCE Dreadnought Electro Acoustic
12666 - Lakewood A14 CP
9186 - Lakewood D14CP Electro Acoustic, Natural
12674 - Lakewood J14 Baritone Jumbo Electro

6 String Electro Acoustics

12672 - Lakewood J14CP Jumbo Electro
12658 - Lakewood M14 CP
12678 - Lakewood M18CP Grand Concert Electro
13495 - Lakewood M31CP Grand Concert Model
12679 - Lakewood Sungha Jung Signature Electro
5407 - Levin LS500CE, Small Electro, Blue
5406 - Levin LS600CE, Small Electro, Natural
8313 - Levin SW203-CETU Electro Acoustic Black
10933 - Levin SW203CETU Electro Acoustic Sburst
12696 - Maestro Raffles Flame Maple Cust Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB Small Jumbo Electro
12790 - Maestro Raffles MDT Small Jumbo Electro
12789 - Maestro Raffles Monkey Pod Electro
12701 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
12792 - Maestro Rosetta MDT Dreadnought Electro
12596 - Maestro Rosetta with fitted LR Baggs
12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
12791 - Maestro Rosetta SR Dreadnought Electro
13212 - Maestro Singa Flame Maple Custom Electro
12594 - Maestro Singa Handmade Electro Acoustic
12699 - Maestro Singa K-CSB-K Koa Jumbo Electro
13209 - Maestro Singa MRDT Medium Jumbo Electro
13207 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13208 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13055 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
12783 - Maestro Victoria MR OOO with LR Baggs
12225 - Martin & Co 000X1AE Electro Acoustic
8039 - Martin GPCPA4 Electro Acoustic, Natural
12439 - Northwood Custom Koa 80D Electro
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Series D.nought
11245 - Northwood M80-OM Electro Acoustic Guitar
4400 - Northwood R80, 000V Electro, Natural
6403 - Northwood R80, 0M Electro, Natural
11246 - Northwood R80-OO Electro Acoustic Guitar
12472 - Ovation 6868 Elite Standardm Secondhand
12552 - Ovation Applause AE128 in Natural
10034 - Ovation CC24 HB Celebrity Honey Burst
10031 - Ovation Pro Elite 2078AX
10095 - RainSong BI-JM1000N2 Graphite Guitar
10094 - Rainsong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10038 - Rainsong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
9820 - Rainsong CO-DR1000N2
9821 - Rainsong CO-JM1000N2
9819 - Rainsong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - Rainsong CO-WS1000N2
9814 - Rainsong DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10097 - Rainsong H-DR1100N2
10100 - Rainsong H-OM1000N2
10098 - Rainsong H-WS1000N2
9815 - Rainsong JM1000 Graphite Guitar
4812 - RainSong OM1000
10082 - RainSong P12 Parlor
10084 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Blue
10086 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Green
10085 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Pewter
10087 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Red
10088 - RainSong P14 Parlor
10091 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Blue
10092 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Green
10093 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Red
9824 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9823 - Rainsong S-OM1000N2 OM Studio Electro
9822 - Rainsong S-WS1000N2 WS Studio Electro
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
9828 - RainSong Shorty Fine Texture SFT Model
7974 - Rainsong WS1000 Graphite Guitar
5257 - Satori YD18EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
5256 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic, Vint Nat
5255 - Satori YO28HEQ, OM Electro, Natural
12577 - Seagull Artist Mosaic Cutaway Folk Deluxe QII
12546 - Seagull Coastline Grand QI Electro Acoustic
9536 - Sigma 000MC 15E Electro Acoustic Guitar
12236 - Takamine EN20C Electro Acoustic
13477 - Tanglewood DBT SFCE Z
9602 - Tanglewood DBTSFCE Quilted Purple
13468 - Tanglewood TPE DC DLX Electro Acoustic
13292 - Tanglewood TPESFCEAS
13293 - Tanglewood TPESFCEDS Electro Acoustic
13294 - Tanglewood TPESFCELS Electro Acoustic
13295 - Tanglewood TPESFCEZS Electro Acoustic
13466 - Tanglewood TSF CE TSB Electro Acoustic
13465 - Tanglewood TSF CE WH Electro Acoustic
13480 - Tanglewood TVC Koa Electro Acoustic
13462 - Tanglewood TVC XB
13287 - Tanglewood TVCXFM Electro Acoustic
13459 - Tanglewood TW115 SSCE
13458 - Tanglewood TW130 SMCE Electro Acoustic
12301 - Tanglewood TW15 CENS
13479 - Tanglewood TW28 CSN CE
4188 - Tanglewood TW40 DANE Dreadnought Electro
4187 - Tanglewood TW40 OANE Orchestra
8330 - Tanglewood TW40SD VSE in Vintage SunB.
12669 - Tanglewood TW45 EG E Super Folk Cutaway
9202 - Tanglewood TW45 W OPE Acoustic Guitar
9607 - Tanglewood TW45-HSRE Electro Acoustic
7989 - Tanglewood TW47E
8293 - Tanglewood TW55NSB Electro Acoustic, Nat
12304 - Tanglewood TW73 VSE
12305 - Tanglewood TWJF E
13288 - Tanglewood TWJPE Parlour Electro
7998 - Tanglewood TWRSF CE Cutaway
9200 - Tanglewood TWRTE Travel Guitar
12372 - Taylor 512CE Electro Acoustic, Used
13485 - Taylor 515E Electro Acoustic, Used
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
13082 - Vintage VE660VB Electro-Acoustic Guitar
9535 - Walden CG570CE Electro Acoustic Guitar
10931 - Westcoast SW201 VT Electro, Sunburst
8307 - Westcoast SW201VT Electro Acoustic Black
8306 - Westcoast SW201-VT Electro Acoustic, Nat
0000 - Yamaha - 6 models in stock now

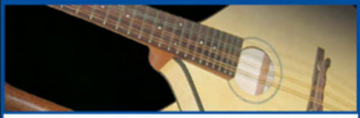
Classical Guitars

13023 - Admira Almeria Classical Guitar
13026 - Admira Concerto Classical Guitar
13024 - Admira Espana Electro Classical Guitar
13025 - Admira Malaga Classical Guitar
13019 - Admira Sevilla Spanish Guitars
13021 - Admira Virtuoso Classical Guitar
8587 - Azahar Model 105 Cadete Classical
8590 - Azahar Model 31A Classical Guitar
6031 - Azahar Model 40B Classical Guitar
13318 - LAG TN66A Classical Guitar
8584 - Mendieta Conservatoire A Classical
8507 - Mendieta Conservatoire C Classical
6779 - Mendieta Estudio P Classical Guitar
6778 - Mendieta Estudio R Classical Guitar
6777 - Mendieta Estudio S Classical
8240 - Mendieta Estudio T Classical Guitar
12238 - Mendieta Estudio VCE Electro Classical
8585 - Mendieta Professional Classica Guitar
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
6335 - Ramirez 2E Classical Guitar
6028 - Ramirez 4E Classical Guitar
5251 - Ramirez AE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model
6337 - Ramirez R1 Classical Guitar
6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar
8357 - Ramirez R4 Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
0000 - Roberto - 3 models in stock now
13470 - Tanglewood TCMR 2 Manuel Rodriguez
12302 - Tanglewood TCMR1 Classical Guitar
10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red

12 Strings

6228 - Breedlove AC250/SM12 Concert Bodied
10280 - Breedlove Atlas AC250SM 12-String
12227 - Eko 12 String Guitar, Secondhand
9553 - Lag T200D12 12 String Acoustic Guitar
8322 - Levin SW206CETU 12 Strg Ele/Acoustic
9816 - Rainsong JM3000 Classic Series Electro
9817 - Rainsong WS3000 Classic Series Electro
10991 - Tanglewood TRD12 Lefty 12 Nat
13475 - Tanglewood TW145 12 SS CE
12706 - Washburn D42S 12 12 String Guitar

Mandolin Family



8810 - Ashbury AM-11 Mandolin (Army and Navy)
8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola
8824 - Ashbury AM-370 Mandolin
13527 - Blue Moon BB15 Bouzouki GR33001
13146 - Cort CMF100 Mandolin, Vintage Sunburst
13505 - Errington Electric Mandolin, Secondhand
12568 - Fender FM63S Acoustic Mandolin, Sunburst
12540 - Fender FM63SE Electro Acoustic Mandolin
10191 - Fender Mando-Strat Electric Mandolin
4551 - Jimmy Moon A Plus E Electro, Natural
9240 - Jimmy Moon A2 Acoustic Mandolin, Natural
4564 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat
4563 - Jimmy Moon Octave Mandolin (Mandola) Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin
10196 - Maestro Electric Mandolin, Pre-Owned
10018 - Ozark Celtic Flatback Octave Mandola Nat
9430 - Ozark Flat Back Bouzouki
8315 - Westcoast M20 Mandolin Sunburst
12347 - Westcoast M20S Mandolin Sunburst
8316 - Westcoast M50E Electro Mandolin

Travel Guitars

13217 - Maestro IR3 CSB A Meridian Travel Guitar
5214 - Martin & Co LXM Little Martin, Natural
5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
13324 - Martin LX Red Little Martin
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
7320 - Martin LX1E, Electro Travel Guitar
9588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel
13478 - Tanglewood TWRT Travel Acoustic Guitar
9200 - Tanglewood TWRTE Travel Guitar
13271 - Vintage VTG100 Travel Guitar in Natural
13128 - Vintage VTR800PB Viator Travel Guitar

Ukuleles

12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ306 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UBJ1 Banjo Ukulele
8209 - Delta Blue Ukulele Banjo
8208 - Delta Blue DUB2F Ukulele Banjo
12420 - Fender '52 Tele Shaped Ukulele
9080 - Fender U'Uku Soprano Ukulele
13065 - Iberica Concert Special Ukulele
13066 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Acacia
13067 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Walnut
12338 - Iuke Piccolo Standard Ukulele Inc Gigbag
9196 - Java TUJ1 Concert Ukulele
12800 - Kala KA-BNJ/BK-C Concert Banjo Ukulele
12799 - Kala KA-BNJ/BK-S Soprano Banjo Ukulele
12798 - Kala KA-JTE/2TSG Tenor Ukulele Sunburst
12797 - Kala KA-JTE/HB Tenor Ukulele Honeyburst
9345 - Kala U Bass Electro Ac In Solid Mahogany
8127 - Kala U Bass in Mahogany
4722 - Kala U-Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
12285 - Lag U100C Concert Ukulele
13085 - Magic Fluke M10 Nat Fluke Concert Uke
10955 - Magic Fluke M20 Natural Fluke Tenor Uke
13086 - Magic Fluke M40 Mango Flea Concert Uke
13084 - Magic Fluke M80 Maple Uke Banjo, H/wood
10958 - Magic Fluke M80 Walnut Uke Banjo
10956 - Magic Flute M30 Mango Flea Soprano Uke
5010 - Mahalo UTL1 Soprano Ukulele
9297 - Mahalo UTL1E, Vintage Sunburst
8515 - Ohana BK20 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK22 Baritone Ukulele
7101 - Ohana BK35 Baritone Ukulele
12609 - Ohana BKB35E Bass Ukulele
7102 - Ohana CK10S Concert Ukulele in Mahogany
12607 - Ohana CK15W Concert Ukulele
12605 - Ohana CK15Z Concert Ukulele
9050 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Uke
4466 - Ohana CK20S Concert Ukulele
8520 - Ohana CK35CE Electro Concert Ukulele
12603 - Ohana CK38 Concert Ukulele
8513 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8509 - Ohana SK10CR Soprano Ukulele, Cherry Red
4712 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele
7099 - Ohana SK15BLK Soprano Ukulele in Black
4711 - Ohana SK20S Soprano Ukulele Uke
8517 - Ohana SK22Z Sop Ukulele Zebrawood B&S
4710 - Ohana SK25 Soprano Ukulele
4715 - Ohana SK35G Solid Mahogany Gloss
9529 - Ohana SK50MG Soprano Ukulele
4714 - Ohana SK50WG Soprano Ukulele
7108 - Ohana SK70MG Soprano Ukulele
7106 - Ohana SK75 Soprano Ukulele
7107 - Ohana SK75R Soprano Ukulele
12608 - Ohana SKS15E Slim Electro Soprano Uke
4708 - Ohana TK10 Tenor Ukulele
4465 - Ohana TK20 Tenor Ukulele
12611 - Ohana TK38 Tenor Ukulele
12390 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag
13311 - Ohana Concert Uke Gig Bag
13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag
13310 - Ohana Baritone Uke Gig Bag
12310 - Ortega RU5 Concert Ukulele
5009 - Ozark Ukulele Banjo
12522 - Recording King RU998 Resonator Ukulele
12740 - ResoVille Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele
10376 - Risa CKK Concert Ukulele
10382 - Risa UKA SWS Soprano Ukulele
9639 - Stagg USX SPA Soprano Uke Spalted Maple
10426 - Uluru III Tenor Ukulele
12189 - Uluru Koa II Concert Ukulele
10427 - Uluru Koa III Tenor Ukulele
13063 - Uluru KoholaConcert Ukulele
10424 - Uluru Lehua I Soprano Ukulele
10425 - Uluru II Concert Ukulele
10433 - Uluru Pukana LA IIC Cutaway Concert Uke
13033 - Vox Ukelectric 33 Ukulele, Blackburst

Acoustic Amplification

5709 - AER AG8 Powered 60w Extension Monitor
5706 - AER Acousticube III - 120w, 1x8"
5712 - AER Alpha - 40W, 1x8"
5193 - AER Alpha Plus - 50W, 1x8"
5705 - AER Basic Performer Acoustic Bass Amp
5704 - AER Basscube 550W Acoustic Bass Amp
5710 - AER Compact 60 Mk2 Hardwood - 60W, 1x8
9494 - AER Compact 60 Mk III
5707 - AER Compact Classic Pro - 60W, 1x8"
5708 - AER Compact 60 Mk2 Mobile - 60W, 1x8
4945 - AER Compact XL - 200W, 2x8"
9028 - AER Domino 3 200w Watt Acoustic Amp
0000 - Acus One - 9 models in stock now
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo
0000 - Fishman - 5 models in stock now
9711 - Laney LA12C Acoustic Amp Combo
0000 - Markbass - 3 models in stock now
4573 - Peavey Ecoustic E20 - 20W, 1x8"
4572 - Peavey Ecoustic E208 - 20W, 2x8"
0000 - Roland - 6 models in stock now
13481 - Stagg 15 AA DR Acoustic Combo Amp
0000 - Tanglewood - 3 models in stock now
9522 - Vox AGA70 Acoustic Amp Combo
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

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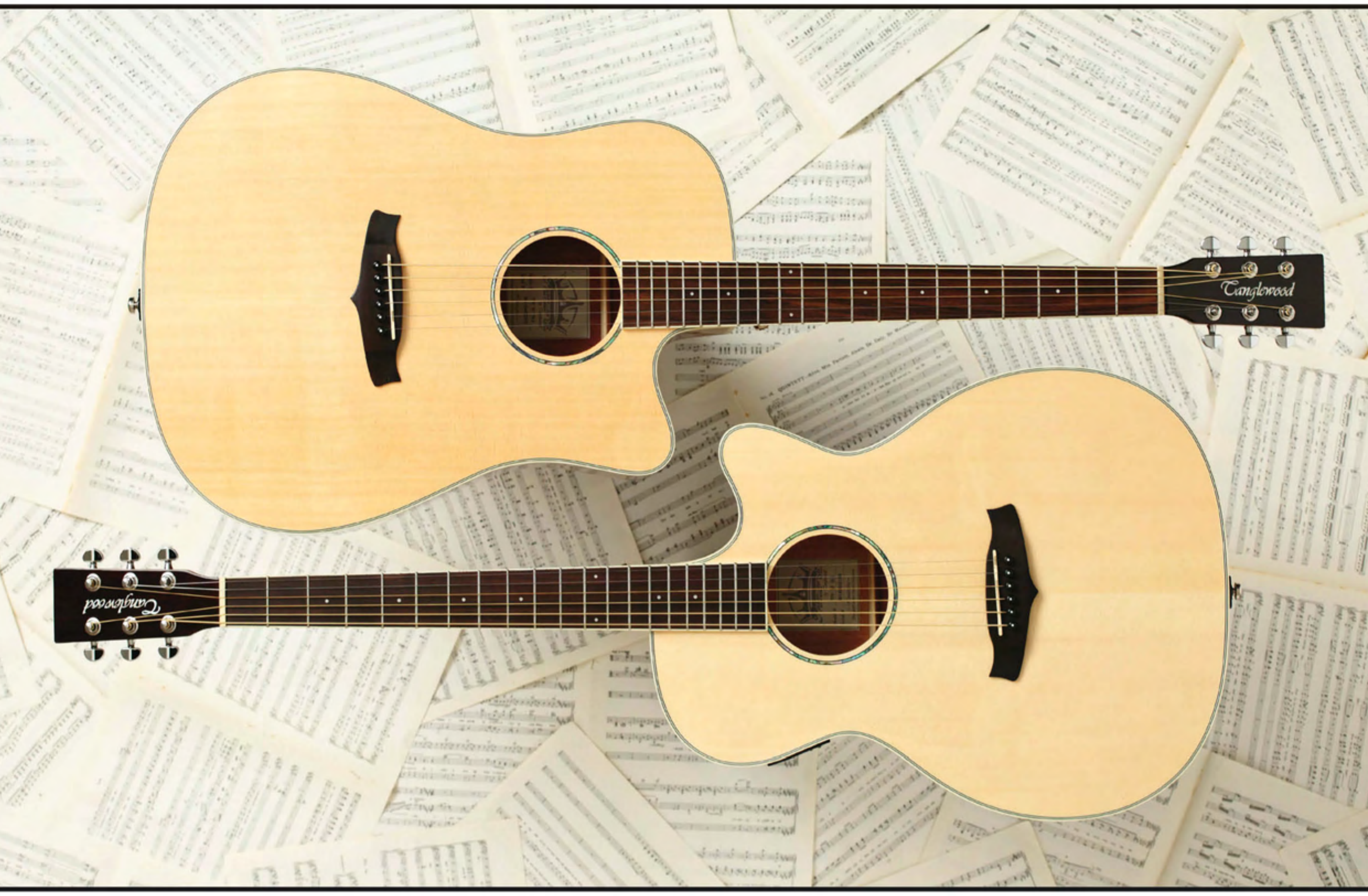
NEW PREMIER SE GUITARS IN STORES NOW



A note from Michael Sanden...

After working with Tanglewood for eight years now, I am still reassured and impressed by their relentless search for improvement and absolute perfection. My latest brief was to develop a bracing system that would release the intricate & delicate tonal character of their solid tops in a similar way to that found on one of my Sanden instruments or any other high end, handmade, boutique guitar.

Our work in this regard has taken almost two years of testing and led us to finally establish the "Tapered Parallel Bracing" system, a design that retains solid structure in all key areas yet enhances the full flexibility of the top and allows the timbers ability to breathe and flow along with the variable attack of the player.

Try this new system in the Premier SE range. In my opinion, this is as good as it gets!

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LONDON

The London Acoustic Guitar Show took place in association with Acoustic magazine on 13-14 September with a bit of a twist – an added floor for the electric brethren, Electric Live. We sent Andy Hughes into the midst of the LAGS to report on the new gear, the live performances and, of course, the green room exclusives. Here's what went down...

WORDS: ANDY HUGHES IMAGES: RICHARD ECCLESTONE

CALLING

This year's LAGS included Electric Live – another floor dedicated to the electirc player, headed up by Nile Rodgers

FAITH GUITARS: *"We have been here for many years, and we find a good target audience. For us, it's a regular event in our calendar."*

COLLINGS GUITARS: *"We saw a better attendance than last year which, of course, we are pleased about."*

AUDEN GUITARS: *"It's a great show, we had lots of interest in the new models we showed this year which you'll be able to see reviewed in Acoustic shortly."*

Time really does fly, but the end of summer signalled a trip to the capital for the annual London Acoustic Guitar Show, this year incorporating Electric Live. It's a sign of the reputation the event has garnered over its four years that the legendary Nile Rodgers flew in specially to attend, and effortlessly became one of the weekend's highlights – but more about that a little later. The format of the guitar show remained largely unchanged, except for the addition of a second floor featuring electric guitars and amplification – along with some guests of a solid body persuasion to add to the main stage and masterclass schedule.

Still in place, and as popular as ever, was the Acoustic Café where young up-and-coming musicians are offered a platform for performance, and a chance to shine. It only takes the right promoter or record label employee to be wandering past looking for a sandwich and a coffee to hear a few bars and beats, and the rest can very much be history.

The foundation of the London Acoustic Guitar Show remains the exhibitors serving up a chance to show and demonstrate some of the most beautiful guitars and accessories available to a willing audience of guitar enthusiasts. Add that element to a buzzing, yet family-friendly atmosphere and the chance to see some major recording artists up close, it represents an excellent weekend for not just the serious guitarist but also lovers of great music.

Saturday dawned brightly and a distinctive figure strolled down London's Hammersmith Road with sunglasses, dreadlocks, and a grin as big as his CV. It was none other than Nile Rodgers – alone save for his trusty white Fender Stratocaster and a few "Hey, Nile" comments from people sitting in the morning traffic – making his way toward the Olympia Conference Centre to officially open the 2014 show. No minders, no management, no one muttering into radios and looking menacing – just a musician with his guitar talking a stroll in the morning London sunshine.

Rodgers lets his music do the talking. He has a CV boasting some of the most famous records on the planet and he unleashed a 50-minute set bursting with the stories behind his most famous riffs, David Bowie anecdotes and, of course, that song (Daft Punk's 'Get Lucky' for which he bagged numerous Grammy Awards). Before all of that, though, he took some photos of the audience, which extracted a huge deal of clapping from the excitable fans. As Nile explained, since his remission from cancer, he has made a point of documenting his life, to keep a record of the days, months and years he did not expect to enjoy.

There is little doubt that those who attended Rodgers' appearance on Saturday would have been delighted to sit there for the entire day and night, such was the intensity and value of his anecdotes. As he told the audience: he was born to a 14-year-old heroin addict, so his start was hardly the most auspicious, but his tenacity, matched only by his talent, has

Australian guitar brand, Cole Clark, was represented at LAGS by new UK distributor Zed Music Café

seen him become one of the world's most in-demand guitar players and record producers, almost single-handedly ensuring the wave of disco fever engulfing America in the late 1970s made its way to the dance floors of the rest of the world. Nile's story about writing one of the best-known singles in the world – Chic's 1977 hit 'Everybody Dance' – and selling it to his musical partner, bassist Bernard Edwards, was a classic piece of story-telling simply for the humour he brought to it, as well as the fact that it was a springboard into the highest echelons

SOUTH THAMES COLLEGE:

"I'm a student at the college and we looked for other potential students who have the time for a course, and want to learn about guitars."

CASIMI GUITARS:

"Our main aim was to build on our European contacts here – now we're working with the North American Guitar thanks to the show. I think the silent room for customers to try guitars is an excellent idea."

Show-goers caught a glimpse of the latest product demos as they walked through the show's exhibition halls

Lowden endorsee, Jon Gomm, took to the stage on both Saturday and Sunday

Chart topper, Gabrielle Aplin, performed on the main stage on Saturday afternoon with her Martin guitar

APP EXTRA
PRESS PLAY FOR
EXCLUSIVE VIDEO CONTENT

Squeeze legends headlined the main stage on Saturday afternoon – read their cover interview on page 48

YAMAHA GUITARS: *"We were getting our name out; the marketing for our new L Series range has been very good, and we hope people will come back to our Wardour Street premises and check out our entire range."*

STAND MADE: *"2014 was our first year. As an online company, it's great for people to see our stands and be able to touch them, and ask about them. The show has really done the job."*

of popular music for Nile. Featuring tales of his production work with some of the biggest selling pop musicians in the word, he plucked away at his much worn and well-used guitar – the Hitmaker – that he confirmed has appeared on several billion dollars' worth of records overs the years. Whether talking about his gentle on-stage teasing of Prince about his effects pedals, or his recent remission from cancer, Nile presented all his stories with self-effacing wit and warmth. Is Nile Rodgers is the coolest man on the planet? We think so.

Saturday continued with the Guitar Idol final, hosted by Guitar Interactive magazine, which is proof of what we are always saying at *Acoustic* magazine: the standard of musicianship in all forms of guitar playing continues to grow at an exciting rate.

The masterclass suite continued to be a popular attraction at the LAGS thanks to its

LAG Guitars at the show with new distributor, Marshall following their acquisition of the brand earlier this year

Photo Credit: Jordan McLachlan

Acoustic Phosphor Bronze
The tone you love – for longer

Elixir® Strings Acoustic Phosphor Bronze deliver distinctive phosphor bronze warmth and sparkle - together with extended tone life.

Elixir Strings is the only coated string brand to protect the entire string, keeping tone-killing gunk out of the gaps between the string windings. Our innovative Anti-Rust Plated Plain Steel Strings prevent corrosion, ensuring longer life for the entire set.

Guitarists tell us *Elixir* Strings retain their tone longer than any other string, uncoated or coated.

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APP EXTRA
PRESS PLAY FOR
EXCLUSIVE VIDEO CONTENT

Lewis Watson played the main stage on Sunday with his Patrick James Eggle Linville

COLE CLARK GUITARS:

"We are new to the UK, and this was a great event with a really buzzing atmosphere. We had a great response to our Zed Café venture."

TAYLOR GUITARS:

"We have an excellent position here at the show each year, and we had hundreds of people trying out our guitars over the weekend. It's great!"

sterling reputation for bringing in some of the top musicians in the world who offer the audience an up-close-and-personal experience. Technical advice, songwriting tips, Q&As, some songs played and broken down to discuss the construction – all in a perfectly intimate environment. Where else do you get this level of interaction with your favourite players?

Opening the masterclass sessions this year was Tony McManus. The level of tone and timbre he extracted from his custom PRS acoustic was spellbinding, and it was a pleasure to spend some time in his company. Following Tony was another superlative musician: the always-entertaining Lowden endorsee Jon Gomm. Jon's intro to his performance referred to his music as "head melting". That just about summed it up.

Gabrielle Aplin stepped up to the plate on the main stage for a Saturday afternoon slot. Regular readers of *Acoustic* will know that the use of social media has propelled an increasingly large number of acoustic musicians' careers from bedrooms into studios and onto stages. It is gratifying to see Gabrielle Aplin reap the benefits of this route to stardom, and the level of success that can be reached with social media – combined, of course, with the requisite levels of talent and determination.

On stage, Gabrielle is a little nervous (why, we don't know) yet she capably demonstrates an excellent grasp of the dynamics of solo performance with her use of volume and pitch control on both her guitar and vocal. It was a deservedly well-received outing for Gabrielle who, in her unassuming nature, performed

Elixir Strings provided some superlative entertainment throughout the weekend

Czech-based brand Rozawood are LAGS regulars with some great flat tops

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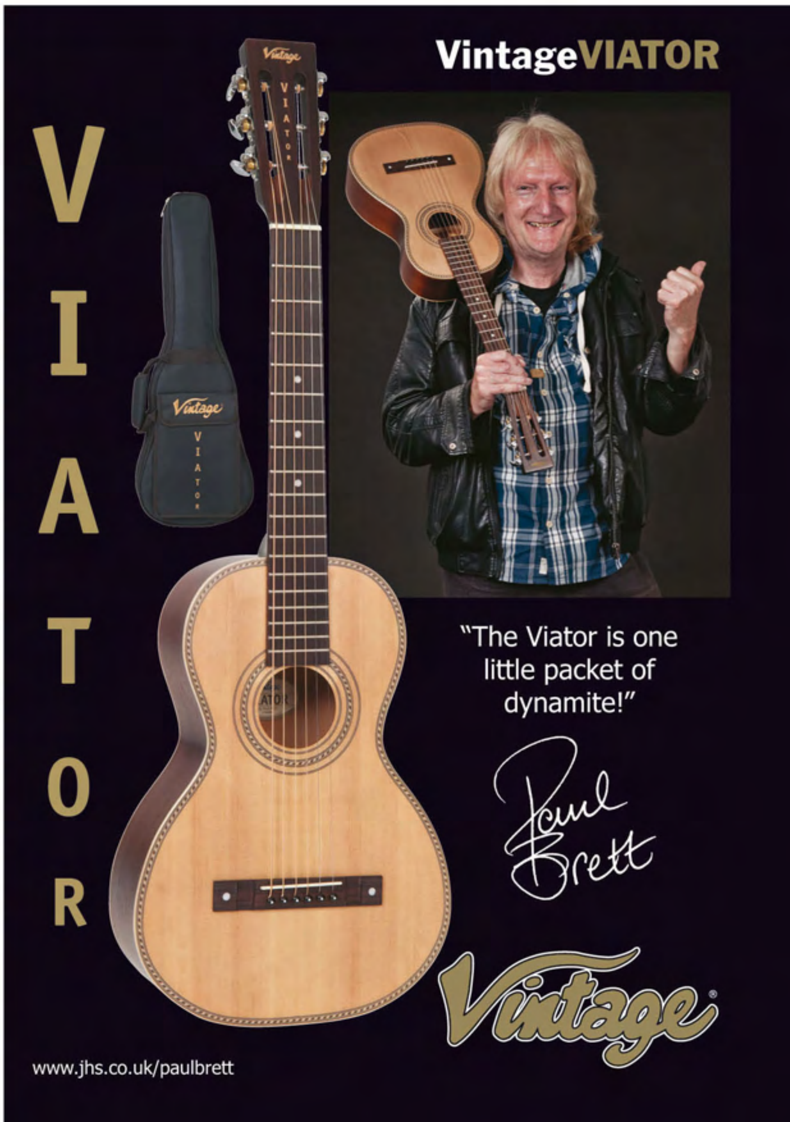
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TANGLEWOOD: *"We were here to show our instruments, rather than to sell direct. It's always a very good show – and it's great to support to the UK market."*

THE GREAT BRITISH BANJO COMPANY: *"It's always nice to come out and see people here – a good mix of companies and visitors. It's been a great experience for us."*

MUSICIANS' UNION: *"We have been here since the first year, and we always get a good response from students, which is our main aim."*

CRAFTER GUITARS: *"The show was bigger and better this year – it's gathering serious momentum."*

FAIR DEAL MUSIC: *"We always enjoy coming to the LAGS. It's good to see friends and make new contacts."*

Newton Faulkner returned to LAGS 2014 for an exemplary showcase of his talents

a stunning set of hits from her debut album *English Rain* with her Martin guitar – not to mention a rendition of Joni Mitchell's classic 'A Case Of You'.

Back in the masterclass suite, Whitesnake legend Bernie Marsden was busy bridging the acoustic/electric gap with his tales of songwriting and his influential guitar work. He was also happy to dismiss, with a smile, any lingering dreams of a reunion of the original Whitesnake. Not because of the oft-quoted "musical differences" but simply because Bernie has other projects, although he is in regular touch with Whitesnake main man David Coverdale, and appears live from time to time with him to guest on 'Here I Go Again'.

The highlight of the Saturday was the appearance of Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook belting out Squeeze hits in one of their duo sets. Aside from Lennon and McCartney, can you name another British songwriting duo as influential as Difford and Tilbrook? You'd struggle. With a body of work spanning the last four decades, the pair delighted the audience with acoustic renditions of 'Cool For Cats', 'Tempted', 'Labelled With Love', 'Black Coffee In Bed' and a host more. As well as witnessing these hits played in this fashion, the sheer joy of doing this after so long emanates through the entire set. Glenn Tilbrook, in particular, gave his guitar a serious workout as he vigorously tore up some of the band's memorable back catalogue. There is no doubt that the music industry is a better place with Difford and Tilbrook back in it – and back working together. The audience at the LAGS gave the two maestros a well-deserved reception and we can all look forward to hearing new music in the not too distant future.

Among the veritable banquet of live music

The ever-popular up-and-coming showcase of the Acoustic Cafe stage

It's not just about guitars – folk instruments were on offer too

Elixir Strings and Taylor Guitars are two LAGS regulars

PJE-designed UK brand Faith Guitars with some new limited editions on display

on offer, the backbone of the London Acoustic Guitar Show is as an exhibition of the newest innovations in acoustic guitars, and all the relative accessories that go with it such as amps, strings, cases, pickups, straps – you name it.

Until you actually see the vast array and variety of instruments on show here, it's easy to forget just how versatile the acoustic guitar is. All guitars displayed each year are available to drool over (of course) but, more importantly, you can test drive some of the finest instruments being made in the world today, including some guitars that you'd be hard pushed to find elsewhere, take for example, South Africa-based Casimi Guitars. Their guitars retail in the UK for around £10k (via the North American Guitar) and were available for the first time in the UK at the LAGS – if you were lucky enough to check these instruments out, you'd be rushing around trying to find the capital to invest in not just a quality acoustic, but a work of art.

Joining us this year, as he does every year, is collector and all-round walking encyclopaedia of the history of the guitar, Paul Brett. Paul brings a small selection of his vintage instrument collection to show, and is on hand to talk about the history of the guitars. It's always worth a walk past Paul's stand to have a quick chat,

FRESHMAN GUITARS:
"We saw a good footfall, and plenty of interest in our new Songwriter Series."

GO TO GUITARS:
"There was a good mix of ages at this show, along with some really nice people. Our sales were very busy."

Tony McManus gave spellbinding performances in both the masterclass and on the main stage across the LAGS weekend

Jon Gomm and George Lowden appeared together on Sunday for a Q&A

and look at these pieces of history, and listen to Paul's stories about collecting some of the world's most sought after guitars.

One aspect of owning a guitar that should be given some serious consideration is insurance. Not the most glamorous aspect of owning and playing an instrument, but if you are outlaying the financial equivalent of a family car, you should seriously consider getting some insurance to cover loss, damage or theft. Musicguard was on hand this year to offer advice to visitors about the benefits of owning an instrument without insurance – so when you get home with your brand new guitar, and the initial thrill has calmed down, it might be worthwhile giving them a call and discussing the safety of your pride and joy.

For professional musicians, and even those taking their first tentative steps toward a career in the music industry, a chat with the Musicians' Union is always a good idea – and they had a stand over the weekend to ensure that some appropriate advice was available.

Something else to consider when you are buying one of the gorgeous instruments that tempt you on the various exhibition stands, or whether you have your old and trusted favourite back home, is a safe place to put your guitar. That is where Stand-Made can help. They are a brand new company manufacturing bespoke guitar stands in a variety of attractive wood types and finishes. They're online and available from The North American Guitar. Eagle-eyed show goers will have noted that Chris Difford is an advocate of these bespoke stands.

Tony McManus got things off to a flying start on Sunday morning in the main auditorium. He was introduced as one of the finest fingerstyle guitarists around, and justified that acclaim with some matchless guitar playing on his custom shop PRS, and witty stage conversation.

Over in the masterclass suite, Jon Gomm made a welcome return, this time in the company of master luthier George Lowden. The combination of George's easy Irish charm and Jon Gomm's wry humour made them an enjoyable combination answering questions about playing techniques, luthiery, and of course that guitar – Wilma (Jon's Lowden).

ELIXIR STRINGS:
"We had loads of great interaction and heard some awesome players – it's always great here."

LOWDEN GUITARS:
"It was a great show and we had lots of interest this year for our 40th anniversary – particularly in our new Wee Lowden and Pierre Bensusan's Old Lady signature. We have seen an increase year-on-year."

MUSICGUARD:
"Insurance is very important, we expect people who have bought instruments over the weekend to give us a call."

Collings Guitars, along with Guitar XS, exhibited both flat tops and mandolins

Patrick James Eggle Guitars – including acoustics and his latest Macon electrics

James Dean Bradfield of the Manic Street Preachers headlined Sunday's main stage

Back to the main auditorium and Lewis Watson performed another of his emotionally-charged sets complete with his custom Patrick James Eggle acoustic. Lewis is able to channel both the charming sensitivity yet blistering strength of the solo acoustic performer, his songs yearning for the big time. With an omnipresent and introspective longing, his skills as a songwriter and performer belie his 21 years. Blooming with folk influences, Lewis is a guitar player we'll be seeing hanging around for a long time.

Newton Faulkner, a long-time friend of *Acoustic* magazine, returned for his third year and was on hand to deliver his mix of songs, technique advice and inspiration, with his trusty Benjamin acoustics. Taking the time out to appear at the show while he's in the middle of recording a new album, Newton proved – if any was ever needed – why he's at the top of his game, and why he's one of the UK's most inventive guitar players.

Back to the main auditorium for Nile Rodgers' second appearance of the weekend to rapturous reception, deconstructing the secrets of his songwriting ability and demonstrating some of his greatest riffs.

Closing the show this year was James Dean Bradfield of the Manic Street Preachers. The reputation of the Manics is gigantic – over the years they have released a series of groundbreaking albums and singles, always managing to tread new musical ground and stay relevant in an ever-changing industry. His set, comprising some of the Manics' most well-known hits ('Motorcycle Emptiness', 'You Love Us', 'Tsunami', 'If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next', 'A Design For Life') is proof that even the most raucous rock songs have acoustic roots that can be unearthed and delivered by one man and his guitar. Hearing the auditorium sing 'A Design For Life' along with JDB was an absolute magical moment. As a man with one of the most powerful and distinctive voices in popular music, it was no surprise that Bradfield casually took over the entire auditorium with the sheer force of his musical delivery and presence. Once again, an intimate performance from a master of rock and pop composition offered free to the visitors at the London Acoustic Guitar Show. It will be hard to top that in 2015, but the LAGS will manage it – after all, they always do.
www.londonacousticguitarshow.com

PATRICK JAMES EGGLE GUITARS:
"The show has gone well for PJE Guitars – we've done a good bit of business. It's nice to catch up with old customers and, of course, meet some new ones."

SANDARAC:
"We were showing some of our new guitars from Catherwood and some lovely handmade flamenco models, along with some acoustic mic and pickup systems."

STAGEWORKS GEAR COMPANY:
"This was a really good year for us, bigger and better than ever."

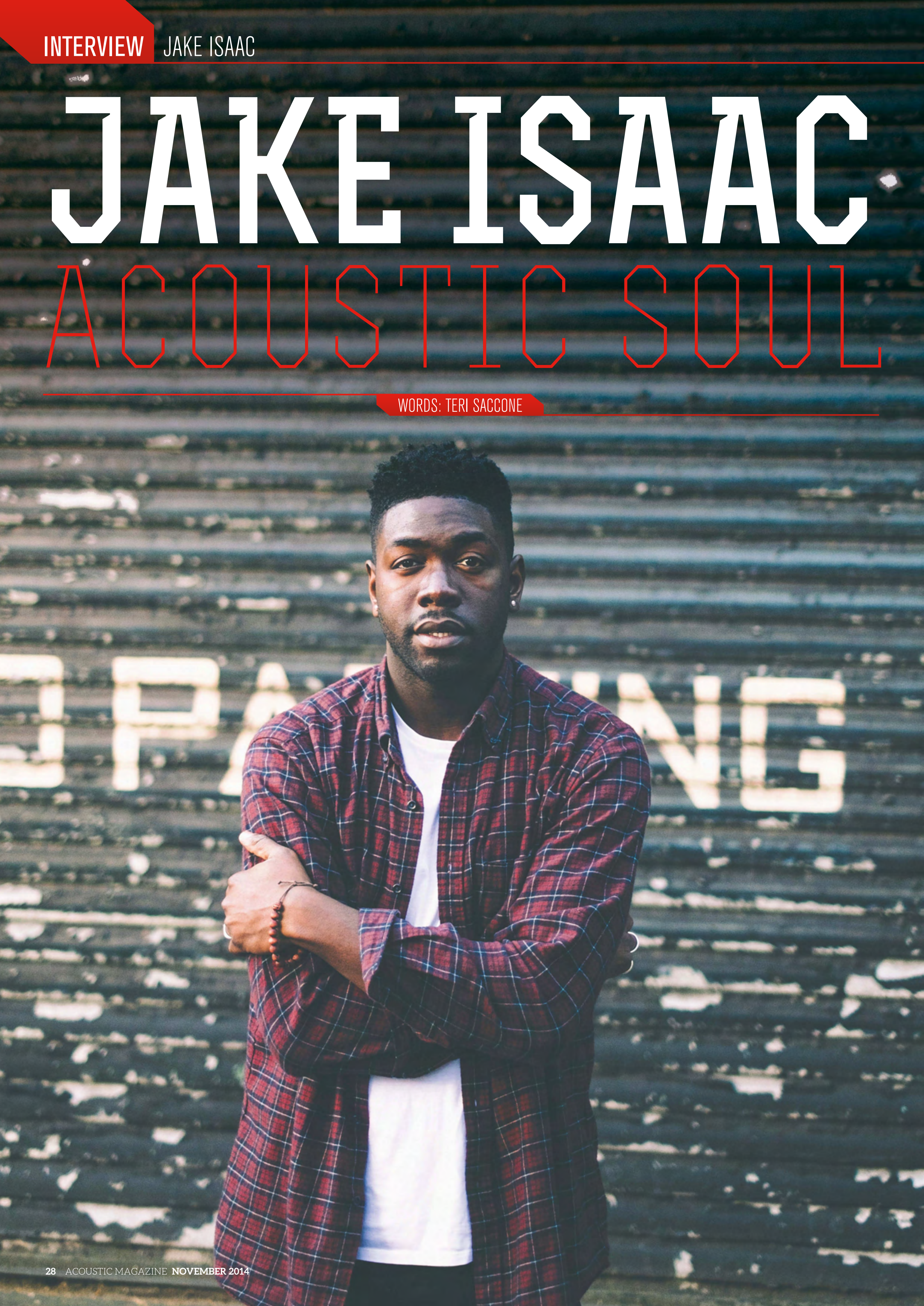
D'ADDARIO:
"We did really well at this year's acoustic show – we are there every year."

ROZAWOOD:
"We go every year, we do good business and we always enjoy a great show."

JAKE ISAAC

ACOUSTIC SOUL

WORDS: TERI SACCONE



Although he may be unfamiliar to some readers, singer-songwriter Jake Isaac is creating quite a buzz right now. He possesses all the credible hallmarks of a rising star with his strong songwriting prowess, a distinctive voice, and nimble, emotive guitar playing. For the uninitiated, check out 'Long Road', 'Waiting Here' and 'Hope' – just a few tracks that provide a taste of Jake's powerful sound.

A home-grown talent, the 29-year-old south Londoner is cultivating an audience organically rather than through a marketing machine or label hype. In fact, *Acoustic* discovered Isaac earlier this year on the live circuit. This last year, Jake has been touring the UK and Europe tirelessly, winning accolades and audiences gig-by-gig, town-by-town – it's that simple.

Speaking of simplicity, Isaac (along with writing partner JP Cooper) creates songs with a bare bones format that perfectly underscores Jake's voice and resplendent acoustic guitar. He is somewhat reminiscent of blues singer Ted Hawkins, if we have to draw a comparison. Isaac's third EP, *War Child*, has just been released (promptly going straight up the iTunes chart). The EP is diverse, exhilarating and promises a whole lot more for the future from the man who is on the cusp of fame. Isaac delivers songs that are catchy, infused with energy and depth.

Who are your main musical influences?
There are so many, but growing up, Paul Simon and Mozart were the main guys due to my old man who played their music so much. Other kids were listening to grime and garage music growing up with me in south London, but I was into *Graceland*. Paul Simon and Mozart may not seem to join up, but both of their music moves people from both ends of the spectrum and they can change your mood in seconds. For me, that's the challenge: to make moving music but in the acoustic genre.

Your music is folky, flavoured with gospel and soul…
I grew up in church as my old man is a minister, so that also influenced my music. He'd crank up Mozart and Simon despite being West Indian. Plus, I love motown – the Temptations, Jimmy Cliff, Eddie Kendricks – because with that music every song means something. David Ruffian and Martha Reeves, too – all those singers with a distinctive voice, they all have such feeling. That's missed in some of today's music; it doesn't get under people's skin. That old stuff is timeless – it's still relevant now. Whereas today, much of the pop music is largely forgettable. But if something has a deep feeling, you don't forget it. We've become a generation of bedroom artists who may or not get lucky with our music.

Did growing up with a minister for a father allow you to play music in church? There seems to be spiritual elements to your music, too.
Yes, that influence had a massive effect on not only my music in the past, but even my music now. My dad is and has always been supportive of my music and I definitely carry on that spirituality.

You play a variety of instruments fluently (especially guitar and piano) yet you record with a full band.
Yes, because it's good to bring in other ideas so that I am open to other contributions – I want to keep it fluid, and open-minded. Sometimes, in order to grow, you have to keep quiet and listen to other musicians. I've fallen upon lyrics and ideas by mistake. That's why I get to see what other people are thinking and contribute the best they can. Just because you have an idea for a song, sometimes it's a wise guy who is short in his words. I really want to grow in this career no matter how big or small it gets. Sometimes the emotions come from others, not just chords. I really think I'll grow more by sharing someone else's emotions.

Do your lyrics come to you with, or separately from, the melodies?
A lot of the time I hum the melodies and then I see certain words as I hum. Or I have a one-liner and from there I build up the story and the lyrics. Or if I hear or have a melody, it makes me feel a certain way and I have to try to expand on that with the lyrics. For instance, music can make you feel like rain but it's hard to say exactly why, but I try to put that feeling across.

What are your main guitars?
The first I ever bought was a Freshman I paid £200 for – she's faithful and I still love her. I've also got a Taylor 307 that my godfather gave me. I love the feeling of Taylor guitars, especially jumbo ones.

When did you realise you had a great singing voice and how did you develop it?
[Laughs] I never really saw it like that… I kind of was a bit of a closet writer who wrote love songs. I started writing pop songs for other acts, and then a friend said I should try doing my own stuff. I try to dig deep and pull out my own vibe and sound. I suppose it's like the saying goes: "It's not just about what you say, it's how you say it." I certainly feel that's the case with my voice.

***War Child* has some lyrics that are a bit political. Do you think singer-songwriters today are afraid to take a political stance?**
I think this is the case for a lot of mainstream artists, simply because of the influence of pop music nowadays. It's crazy how bad information can pass around the world so quickly through mediums such as Twitter, but highlighting social injustices is not something that is seen in the charts. I really wish one day soon that will change. Hopefully, one day, I'll have the privilege of being one of those artists who utilises the little bit of exposure given to make a stand.

You are a self-taught guitarist, but what put you on the path to pick up a guitar in the first place?
I first started playing during my second year at university when I was supposed to be in a classroom. A great mate of mine lent me his gorgeous Lowden guitar. I learned it was one of the guitars that made me sound good.

Besides growing as an artist and making people feel something in your songs, what else do you hope to achieve with your music?
I really hope to not limit what I do, and to just make music. So, to me, the sky's the limit. There's nothing like writing a good song that you're overjoyed about. That is so satisfying to me.

So you are on the brink of bigger things, but you don't feel the pressure going toward the next level?
For me, whatever happens next, I've been fortunate enough to grow and find myself over the last two years playing so much live, to so many great audiences in the UK and Europe. I've tried to be truthful to myself and my plan would be to continue doing my music my way. If a chord progression or a lyric feels right on a gut instinct, I've learned to trust that.

Jake Isaac's War Child *EP is out now. Keep up-to-date with Jake and his music via* ***www.twitter.com/iamjakeisaac***

MARK NEVIN

***Mark Nevin** rose to fame as the songwriter and guitarist with his band Fairground Attraction, but he has now released his solo album **Beautiful Guitars** featuring just that – thanks to luthier Alister Atkin and artist Vic Lee.*

WORDS: STEPHEN BENNETT

Denmark Street in summer. How many star-struck kids, aspiring guitar-gods all, have lingered outside these shop windows and dreamed of owning that red Strat, or the battered, gold-top Les Paul in Andy's, or that dusty D-28 that once, it's rumoured, lived under Bert Jansch's bed? Today, a group of wide-eyed worshippers listens, rapt, to a tour-guide's tales of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll (well, the latter part, anyway) as one of the UK's great songwriters shakes his head at the threat of all this soon being given over to new development and becoming just another stop on the ever-lengthening "heritage" trail.

Mark Nevin knows a thing or two about "beautiful guitars". It's the title of his new album and one that sets out to celebrate the Fairground Attraction founder's near lifelong love affair with the infinite, creative possibility of six-strings tied to a wooden box. With its Tin Pan Alley origins ancient history now, Nevin concedes that Denmark Street is far from what it was. Nevertheless, it's what it still stands for that continues to inspire him.

'I remember, every Saturday, looking in shop windows in Bristol, before I ever came here. I loved that; all the fantastic instruments but, of course, my first guitar was the kind of thing no one would ever put their name to. Cost about a fiver. I soon moved on, though, to what I discovered, much later, to be a Futurama. A plank, basically, but with a great maple neck. From there, my first proper electric was a red Les Paul Deluxe I bought in Kilburn [in homage to his guitar hero, Mick Ronson]. My first serious acoustic was the Gibson MK-81 that's on the video for 'Perfect' and a lot of the early stuff. I've still got it but airport baggage handlers dropped it [of course] and it's never been the same since. After that, I bought the guitar I've been using for years, a Martin J65M [another model, like the Gibson, that's hard to find these days] and recently I've gone back to Gibsons – a J45 that's fitted with a Sunrise pickup,' Mark starts.

Who were your early influences when it came to writing?
I suppose seeing David Bowie when I was about 14 really got me started but also great jazz instrumentalists like Barney Kessel and Joe Pass. Then Earl Klugh and George Benson in the early 70s. Kessel's recordings with Julie London and Pass's with Ella Fitzgerald made a big impression on me. And I loved Paul Simon; all those great acoustic singer-songwriters around that time. The way the Beatles used acoustic guitars was influential, too.

Leading us into the birth of Fairground Attraction…
I'd got a publishing deal as a songwriter and they told me I needed a vehicle for my songs. They were planning a compilation album to showcase the talent signed to the company and I already knew Eddi Reader from her backing vocal work. We called ourselves the Academy of Fine Popular Music after the nickname for the squat I was living in at the time. It was in Cricklewood, opposite the house Dusty Springfield was born in. There must've been something in the water. Almost immediately after that, though, I went off to America to do the Greyhound bus thing [Paul Simon again] and discovered reading. Being one of eight kids, I'd never been able to find either enough space or enough quiet and suddenly, there I was not only deeply into all these amazing books but writing my own short stories. I never felt connected to the pop music that was around at the time, anyway: the electronic Depeche Mode, Pet Shop Boys thing. The short stories started turning into songs. At the same time, Eddi, who was looking for material to sing, wrote to me saying: "Why don't you come home?" I was ready for it, anyway, but didn't really want to write for someone else. I went to see her in Lambeth, playing her some new stuff but she was a lot more taken with the songs I'd planned to keep for myself. Forming the band was the only way to make it work. Once RCA had accepted that I was going to produce it myself or not do it at all, we recorded the album in two and a half weeks and it just went flying to the top of the charts. It was mind-blowing at the time and even now, 25 years on, I'm still not sure I can get my head round it.

How do you get on with 'Perfect' these days? It's become so familiar through television, yet it's only the tip of a large iceberg, work-wise.
I'd certainly never complain about that. To a certain extent, my life is split into "before and after". I went from the aforementioned squat almost straight into finding so many doors opening and discovering a whole new level of confidence. The recording itself is a second take, all the instruments were live, and the whole thing took about 10 minutes. Eddi's singing is just amazing. I heard it not long ago in Camden Market and it sounded fantastic; all voice, like an old blues record or something from the heyday of classic, vinyl pop music. Also, I never realised until recently how important Simon Edwards' guitarron [big, Mariachi-band acoustic bass] is to the overall sound of the band. Double bass doesn't seem to have the same charm.

That whole first album (*First Of A Million Kisses*) still stands up as a great record.
It was so important to me to make exactly the record I wanted to make and not let the company dictate how they thought it should come across. I'm really proud of it to this day.

And then you split.
That's a difficult one to talk about. Essentially, the seeds of it were already there in that I'd insisted on forming, and keeping, the band as the vehicle for the songs and Eddi wanted something else. It reached the point on tour where the whole thing became way too depressing to sustain. We'd just got back from touring in Japan, where we'd done the live album, and were about to record the second studio disc when things became untenable. Awkward stuff was happening on stage and that atmosphere was carrying over into the studio so there came a point where I just thought, "I can't do this any more". I put my guitar down and went home. That was it. The relationship with Eddi broke down and that still baffles me to this day. In fact, there's hardly a day goes by I don't think about it. The crazy thing is, we had what every band wants – complete artistic control and massive commercial success – and yet, essentially, the whole thing fell apart over the fact that they were my songs and not Eddi's. It was impossible. Last year was the 25th anniversary of FOAMK and there was talk of a reunion tour but it never got off the ground; no useful communication on any level, sadly.

You then moved on to some interesting territory. Morrissey?
It was just after the Smiths broke up and I was working with Kirsty MacColl. Years before, I'd been in Sandie Shaw's band so he was aware of me through that. I got a call in the studio and ended up sending him some tapes. He'd respond by postcard, extremely funny stuff, and I'd have to write back to him using a pseudonym [Burt Reynolds]. I was amazed at how shy he was. I remember the first day in the studio, though, hearing Morrissey's lyrics and all of us in the band falling about in hysterics – they were so funny. The whole experience was odd in that it was like having just split up with your true love then starting to go out with a supermodel. It did lead to me finally getting to meet Mick Ronson, though. I'd suggested him with regard to producing the next album and Morrissey went for it. Except we had to find him. Eventually, I got a phone call [adopts

appropriately flat Yorkshire vowels], "'Ello, it's Michael Ronson," followed by, "What's he like?" Turns out he'd never heard anything, either by Morrissey or the Smiths. He nearly didn't make the first meeting because he had to babysit for his sister. Morrissey turned up in disguise, Ronson with the blonde mullet... David Bowie heard the track; he ended up covering it and sadly, a year later, Mick was gone.

Tell us about your song, 'I Know Where Ray Davies Lives'.
Just up the road from us, in fact. He's a real hero. Our kids go to the school nearby and I wrote it for a charity fund-raising thing they were doing. I got the rhyme "Highgate" and "my mate" standing at the checkout in Sainsbury's. People seemed to like it so we recorded it. The same year I was asked to play the Highgate Festival, right next door to Ray's house, and I was worried he might be out mowing the lawn or something and there's me giving out his postcode. He was actually in the audience. Fortunately, he liked it.

So, to the new album, *Beautiful Guitars*.
The concept grew from seeing Vic Lee's fantastic artwork, which we wanted to use for the cover and then getting Alister Atkin to actually make the guitar itself. Well, it's not my guitar yet but that's something I need to work on.

Mark's album is a fine piece of work with the titular, guitar-based beauty hardly restricted to looks (BJ Cole and Tim Edey both feature on the title track). The Kick Horns decorate the album throughout with a punch and swagger on revisited songs, including 'Perfect', and some cracking new material. It's been two hours since the tour-guide herded her charges off on their continuing mission to "do London". Denmark Street is still there, for now. Mark Nevin is definitely still here, writing and singing better than ever. He's convinced that after two years of Fairground Attraction and a mere 23 as a solo artist, this is his best work. It's hard to disagree. Whisper it, but *Beautiful Guitars* is indeed "perfect"... and then some.
***Mark Nevin's* Beautiful Guitars *is out now.* www.marknevin.com**

ATKIN, NEVIN AND LEE
AND THEIR BEAUTIFUL GUITAR

This unique guitar is the product of a playful and inspired collaboration between luthier (Alister Atkin), singer-songwriter (Mark Nevin) and artist (Vic Lee).

The "basic" instrument is an all-mahogany AA (Atkin's flagship design model) that was deliberately left plain in order to let Lee's boldly ornate ink-work do the decorative talking by incorporating (and illustrating) every one of Nevin's song titles from the new album. There's no rosette, allowing still more room for the images, and the matching mahogany binding again offers no contrasting design clutter. Unusually for the AA, the bracing is also mahogany and this has proved something of a revelation for Atkin. Its use here has enabled him to maintain the necessary strength while delivering a new lightness and retaining the model's signature great sound.

The Canterbury luthier has just built an all-mahogany J45 for Paul McCartney, commissioned by the Buddy Holly Educational Foundation. Macca's passionate commitment to animal rights means Atkin couldn't add the instrument's standard leather cover so he's cunningly persuaded another artist friend to paint a trompe l'oeil leather-effect directly onto the wooden body.

Vic Lee took time out from his decorative typography and mural work in London to bring his fantastically elaborate, tattoo-like graphics to his first ever painted guitar. He experimented initially with a DIY-build ukulele before expanding the scope of his ambition with the Mark Nevin AA. Lee sees this and any future commissions as a way of offering musicians a genuine heirloom as well as a practical, fully-functioning art-work. He's looking forward to contributing to similar bespoke projects in future and clearly, with the history of guitar music so rich, varied and indeed, colourful, he sees the pictorial possibilities as endless.
www.atkinguitars.com

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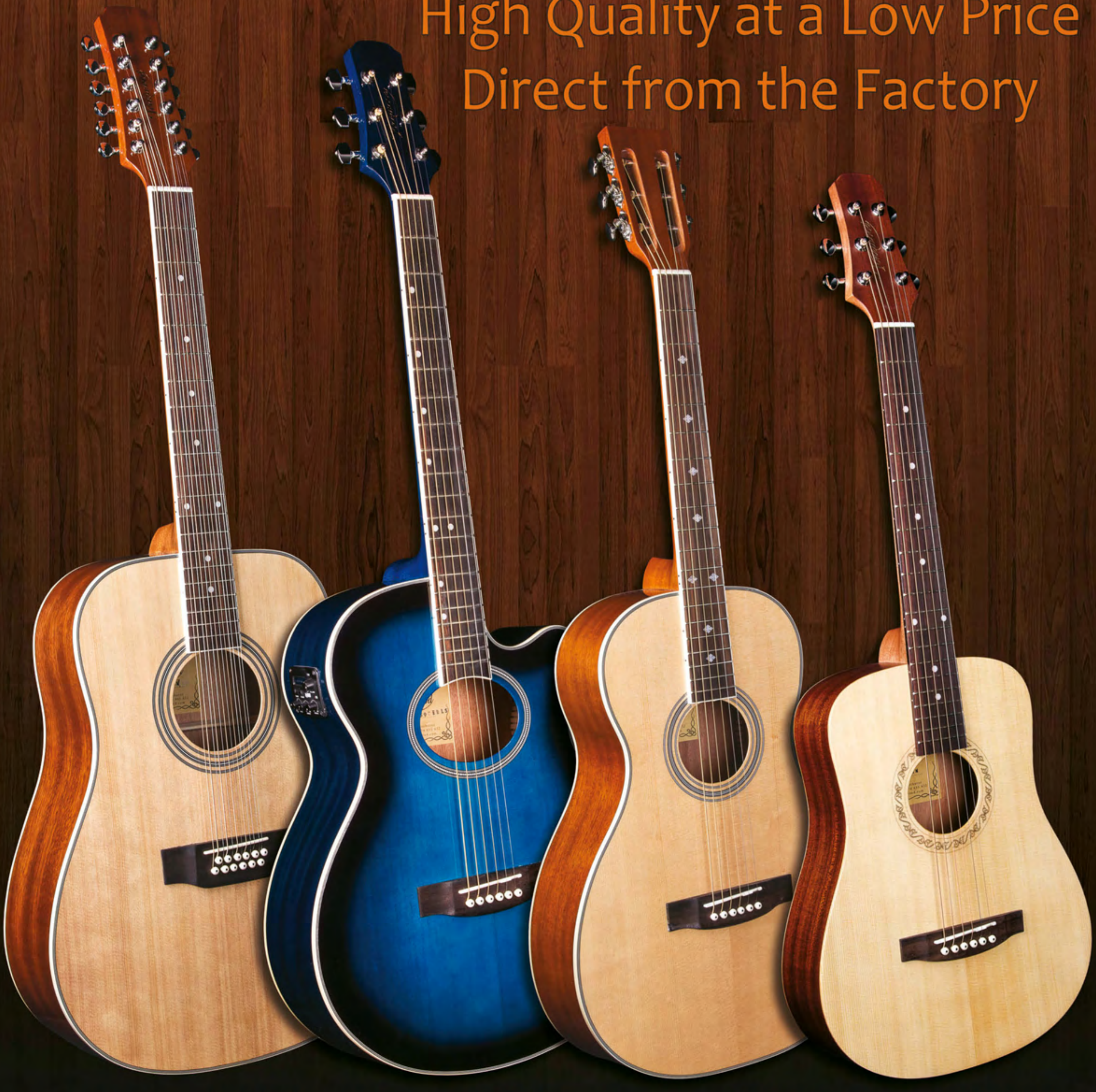

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ROO PANES

Roo Panes is a singer-songwriter from Dorset with a penchant for writing songs inspired by life's tales and wonders, resonating with universal truths and wonders. Armed with his 12-string Taylor, we caught up with Panes as he was about to release his debut album ***Little Giant*** *full of rich harmonies, delightful elegance, and soaring climaxes.*

WORDS: SAM WISE IMAGES: ALEXANDER RHIND

Roo Panes grew up in a rural idyll in Dorset, and the countryside shines out of every part of his gem of an album, *Little Giant*. That's not to say that it's all milkmaids and strapping young farmhands; on the contrary, you feel as though you've been whisked into the clouds, and swept dreamily across the landscape. We caught up with Roo on the day his album launched on an unsuspecting world.

Your album has quite a unique tone: there are cadences of Jeff Buckley among others, but taken to a whole new place. Who do you find inspires you when you listen to them?
The tricky thing is, I've never been very knowledgeable about music; writing has been much more my thing than liofficiousstening. I feel like I heard a lot of Van Morrison and Bob Dylan when I was growing up, which other people played to me, and I got all these lyrics flying at me which really engaged me, and I remember when I first heard Nick Drake because I was amazed by how he was able to create that peaceful sound. I really love Sigur Rós also; they describe their landscape in their music, and I love nature myself, and want to communicate in the same way.

Parts of some of your melodies are almost hymn-like. Do you listen to a lot of folk and traditional music?
Yeah, in terms of classical background, my grandmother was a classical pianist, and I grew up around a lot of orchestral music, but I also used to go to church as a child, and belted out a lot of hymns. In fact, I think the first time I sang properly was singing 'Once in Royal David's City' as a child, knees knocking, up in the balcony

during a nativity play. I tried to pass it off to someone else who I thought was a better singer, but I ended up doing it, and here we are now. My thing is that I just want to be myself, and as I grew up, I just found myself writing songs in my head, and I found I wanted to do it more. Leaving university, I had that choice in front of me, and whatever I wanted to do, I wanted to really do it well, which, if I took a job, would mean little time for music, so I thought I would go for it while I had the chance. I remember when I was at school, my father recognised that I wasn't very good at playing the trumpet or reading sheet music, and he thought maybe I needed something more informal, so he got me a guitar. That was a bit of a turning point, and because I wasn't great at learning the traditional way, it forced me to improvise, which means that I learned how to stumble across things, and now that's a big part of my writing process. My father comes from a farming background, but loves to sing, and my mum was in the theatre, and music was really important to both of them, not as something that had to be a career, but something that enriched your life.

Your bio talks about needing the open country to be able to write; how do you balance that with the need to be in the centre of things for career reasons?
It's an interesting one, because you can definitely write in London, but I do love being out in the open countryside because it's really inspiring, and I feel peaceful. With this album, I wanted to write something that had a peace about it, which would have been hard to do if I hadn't been in a peaceful place. I try to take time to get out of London, be in the countryside, do some travelling; on my solo tour this year, I took time to go the pretty way, visit national parks, and see wonderful things. It's like going for a jog, or feeding yourself – you don't see the benefit immediately, but it percolates and later the inspiration is there. I don't have to be there to write, but if I haven't been for a while, it all starts to dry up.

"I picked up a Taylor 12-string, having never played one before, and that was it, that's what I've played ever since. We used it a lot on the album..."

So, what's the writing process like for you when it does happen?
It used to start, more often than not, with a melody; everyone hums now and then, and I would find myself humming a tune. I felt that I could match that mood and melody to lyrical ideas, but now it comes from all different sides; recently I've been writing songs that are more conceptual. 'Little Giant', on the album, is quite conceptual; I challenged myself to be simple in what I was writing, and that felt like turning a corner in terms of what I was doing. Some have even started with a just a title, nothing musical at all.

***Little Giant* is full of big, inspiring string arrangements. What do you do to reproduce some of the soaring arrangements on the record when you're on stage?**
Basically, when I play solo, I hope that the space actually allows people's imagination to build that sound. I don't mind playing solo, but I love playing with the band, and even then, we don't have the strings to reproduce the record. On this tour, we have a harmonium player with us; we have our core, but we try to create an expansive sound with that. We have a cellist, viola player, drummer and harmonium player this time around, and we're filling that out with vocal harmonies, which took the place of the strings to some extent.

Who would you most like to support or collaborate with?
I think to be honest that I'd love to tour with someone like Sigur Rós, just because they've got such a colourful setup, and so much that I could learn from. They're really creative, lots of instruments, very arrangement-based, and I would love that. I like to think that my songs and my arrangements work together, and from playing solo I have found that my songs can live without the arrangement, but the part of the writing I love the most is the arranging.

Tell me about your guitars; I understand you play a lot of 12-string?
A few years ago I went into a guitar shop to buy a guitar, but I didn't have the technical knowledge to match the sound in my head with the guitars. I played every six-string in the shop, but then I picked up a Taylor 12-string, having never played one before, and that was it, that's what I've played ever since. We used the 12-string a lot on the album, and I've been using it live; it was broken for a long time, and I finally got it fixed, and then I've recently dropped and broken it again. The first time really wasn't my fault; I got it cheap because, for one reason or another, it was on discount. There was a part which was loose, and it just got worse, and it shows you how much I know about guitars that I don't even know what it was that was loose!

The music industry is a changing place in terms of investing in artists. How have you found being a new boy on the block building your reputation?
I think it is quite difficult if I'm honest; when I started off in London, I really didn't know anything about the music world. I knew that I loved writing, and I knew that I had to do something about that; like, if you can run fast, you've just got to run. It was really hard to move forward because I didn't know where I was trying to move, and my initial target was just to survive. I guess that as the years have progressed, I've got a really great team around me, who I can really trust, and who really care about letting us express ourselves musically. I'm really very step-by-step; I've loved making this album, and we're going to be pushing that for the foreseeable future. That's one thing I learned pretty quickly – the more you try to plan things out, the more things become stressful. Things are ever-changing, so it's hard to plan.

Finally, tell us a little bit about the lyrical themes on the album...
The album title is 'Little Giant' precisely because of the lyrical themes. Looking at the songs, I thought that I write music when I'm feeling vulnerable, and I'm trying to send a message to myself. I felt that vulnerability was an important part of what I wanted to do. I wanted to write an album that would encourage people, which would make people feel like life was understood to some extent; not that I can understand anyone's life, but that if people could see what my feelings were, they might feel more connected. There's a lyric in little giant: "start small, grow tall"; I wanted to bring some hope, but in a realistic way, not saying, "everything is going to be ok", but that though life is hard, there is hope.
Roo Panes' Little Giant *is out now.*
www.roopanes.co.uk

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Scott Matthews is a virtuoso guitarist, a fine singer, and a gifted songwriter. His songs inhabit a territory that has commonality with Nick Drake, and also with Jeff Buckley, but he's no copycat – his music is all his own. We caught up with Scott to talk about his latest album Home Part 1, his guitar collection, and custom acoustics.

WORDS: ANDY HUGHES IMAGES: SALLY CONNOLLY

Upon acquiring his first guitar at the tender age of seven, it didn't take long before Scott realised that music was his true calling in life. Scott's diverse musical taste would lead to experimentations with funk, soul and indie rock, with various local bands, before he finally decided to embark on a career as a solo artist. In 2006, Scott released his ground-breaking debut album *Passing Stranger*. More studio albums followed – *Elsewhere* appeared in 2009, followed by *What The Night Delivers* in 2011 (as well as a *Live In London* album in 2010). He's now releasing his latest album *Home Part 1* and has since been the first UK artist to be signed to Nashville-based agency Thirty Tigers.

Scott settles down in his hometown of Wolverhampton to talk about his new album, which he recorded at home – so we begin with the advantages and disadvantages of recording away from a professional studio.

‘At the time I decided to make the album, I had already made three records, and I had accumulated quite a lot of recording gear over the years. I started off with the intention of making some demos, but anyone who records outside a studio will tell you that recording equipment for home use has come on in leaps and bounds over the last few years. So what started out being glorified demos turned into me thinking that with a couple of extra bits of gear, I could turn these demos into something that is release quality. It was a natural progression, the songs were coming together and I gradually realised that the quality of the recording was going to be something good enough to release. I think I captured something else on the record that I probably would not have got in the studio. It was a feeling of contentment. I felt there was time to make the right decisions without rushing. In the past, clock-watching has been an obvious factor, so there was that unforced approach which was really beneficial to the outcome of the record this time.’

‘It is possible to get a little bit too absorbed in what you are doing on your own at home. It’s good to take a step back and be honest and as objective as you can about the work you are doing. I do find that the good stuff will keep floating to the surface. I think songs that aren’t going to make it get submerged and forgotten, and the keepers will stay in your mind until you finish them. The experience has made sure that I have got lots of ideas embedded in my mind for the next few projects; I have got lots of records I want to make over the next few years, and making this album has given me the confidence to think like that. It is a new chapter in where I am going with my career. I have noticed that I sing differently at home, too – I feel as though I can take a few more risks and maybe let go a little bit more. There is also a chance to nip out and get a packet of tea bags and take a break – and there’s been plenty of that, I can assure you!’

Matthews is a mix of virtuosity, songs, and meaning. Although never thinking himself a singer first and foremost, his voice is a sublime instrument with echoes of John Martyn, yet it’s unmistakably Scott Matthews. Guitarist, songwriter, and vocalist – it’s interesting to note where the balance lies for him.

‘I can listen back to the new album, and listen to my first album, and I can hear a change. I have always had issues about my voice, that’s always been the case. With experience, you discover the tones in your voice that work, and the ones that don’t, and you work out the register you can sing in and be most comfortable with. I think any singer is looking to hone in on the aspects of their voice that best expresses what they are trying to say. It is interesting for me because I have been a guitarist for years, right up to my mid-20s, and then suddenly I decided I wanted to express myself in a different way so I started to write songs. People may not be aware that I didn’t make my first album until I was 29, and it wasn’t released until I was 30, so I am quite a latecomer to singing.’

‘I have had a lot of reference points offered over the years, some of them quite bizarre. I really don’t know how to describe it; I can talk about a guitar part and how I came to write a specific part for a specific song, but as far as vocals are concerned, that is a lot harder to pin down and to convey why I sing a song in a certain way. I do tend to think of, and treat, my voice as an instrument. One of the problems with recording at home, when you are singing to four walls, is getting the adrenalin running to get enough emotion into the song for a good vocal sound for the recording.’

It’s hard to pin Matthews down, musically. An eclectic

instrumentalist and songwriter, he draws influences from sparse acoustic guitar sounds as well as country, and folk music. *Home Part 1* has a leaning toward the sparse acoustic guitar sounds – which means more room for his haunting and delicate fingerpicking, particularly on ‘Virginia’. His mastery of song craft earned his single ‘Elusive’ (from debut album *Passing Stranger*) the Ivor Novello award for Best Song Musically and Lyrically in 2007.

‘I just didn’t know what to expect from that,’ he says of the Ivor Novello. ‘I went to the ceremony with my manager and my wife, and when Robin Gibb called my name, I just had this massive wave of insecurity – I felt really strange. I managed to make myself walk to the stage and my mouth started working and I thanked everyone, and it was a fantastic experience, to be awarded something like that for something that is my passion. Even to this day, I am never sure what it was about the song that appealed to the judges, and I am always interested to know what

draws people to that song in particular. I have tried to work out if there is a science behind it, but I haven't discovered that yet,' he laughs. 'I think it is the sparse arrangement that draws people in. I have tried to carry that style on through the last two albums, keeping things pretty uncomplicated on the arrangement front. When I started out, the song ['Elusive'] was a thrashy guitar riff – like I was the sixth member of the Strokes or something – and I knew I had to strip it back and find out what was at the core of it, and go with that.'

Naturally, Scott loves guitars with the passion of a true aficionado. Whether in the UK, or touring abroad, Scott always checks out what the local guitar shops have to offer.

'You never know what you are going to find,' he exclaims. 'I went to a store a few weeks ago and there was a Romanian guy there and he had a whole range of beautiful accordions, for not too much money. I think it is harder to find good guitars at reasonable prices because people have started to realise the value now, and they tend to put them on eBay for auction. I got a great bass guitar in Amsterdam at a well-known guitar store called De Plug. I wasn't looking for a bass guitar, but I got a lovely vintage P-Bass for about 600 euros – that was about eight years ago now. I had a look in the cheap corner, most shops have one, and I found a flatwound Hofner bass and put that on and immediately felt like Paul McCartney – so I brought that home with me, too.'

'When I went to Melbourne two or three years ago, I was invited to a little shop called Music Swap Shop. I bought a 1976 classical Maton – a C50 – which is my all-time favourite guitar now; I used it on my latest album. It is such an expressive instrument; it keeps talking to me every day, you know? It has got a couple of cracks in it, but it gives me so much. I got it for about 800 Australian dollars, and it has helped me so much to get my musical ideas over. They are quite rare guitars now; they probably updated it in the 80s or 90s, but this, I believe, is an original, overseen by Phil Manning who was the main guy. I have got a lovely pickup system in there which translates the sound so well. It has a K&K transducer, which uses four transducer bugs glued under the bridge plate, so they pick up all the body life and the top vibrations. It's only a small system, but I get the most comments about the sound I get with the K&K and the Maton,' he says. 'I did play some other guitars on the album; I have a go-to guitar which is a 1970s Guild D25, which is another one that is right up there for me – that is a songwriting weapon! There is nothing it doesn't seem to like, it will respond to any tunings, even a low tuning like an open C – it will take that on and sound really good. I think because it is an arch top with a rounded back, it gives you that fuller sound which is really useful for solo accompaniment.'

> *"I have a 1961 Harmony Sovereign – one of the rare ones with the pickup in the base of the neck. I picked it up for £45 thanks to a newspaper ad."*

On tour, Scott takes a selection of different instruments – acoustic and electric – including 12- and six-string acoustics and even the classical Maton.

'It's just for different styles and tunings, nothing more that that. I have to have so many guitars for the different key changes. I have a 12-string acoustic, a six-string, a Spanish guitar, and an electric, because I have quite a lot of songs to choose from

now – four records – and I can't play them all on one guitar. I have my Tim Buckley-style Guild F212 XL which is a big jumbo guitar that gives me a great open sound which is good for live shows. I have a Guild F30 for a more intimate sound, and then the Maton for the classical sounding stuff, it has a real presence for songs like 'The City And The Light', 'Eyes Wide Open', and then I have the electric for the ethereal ambient styles.'

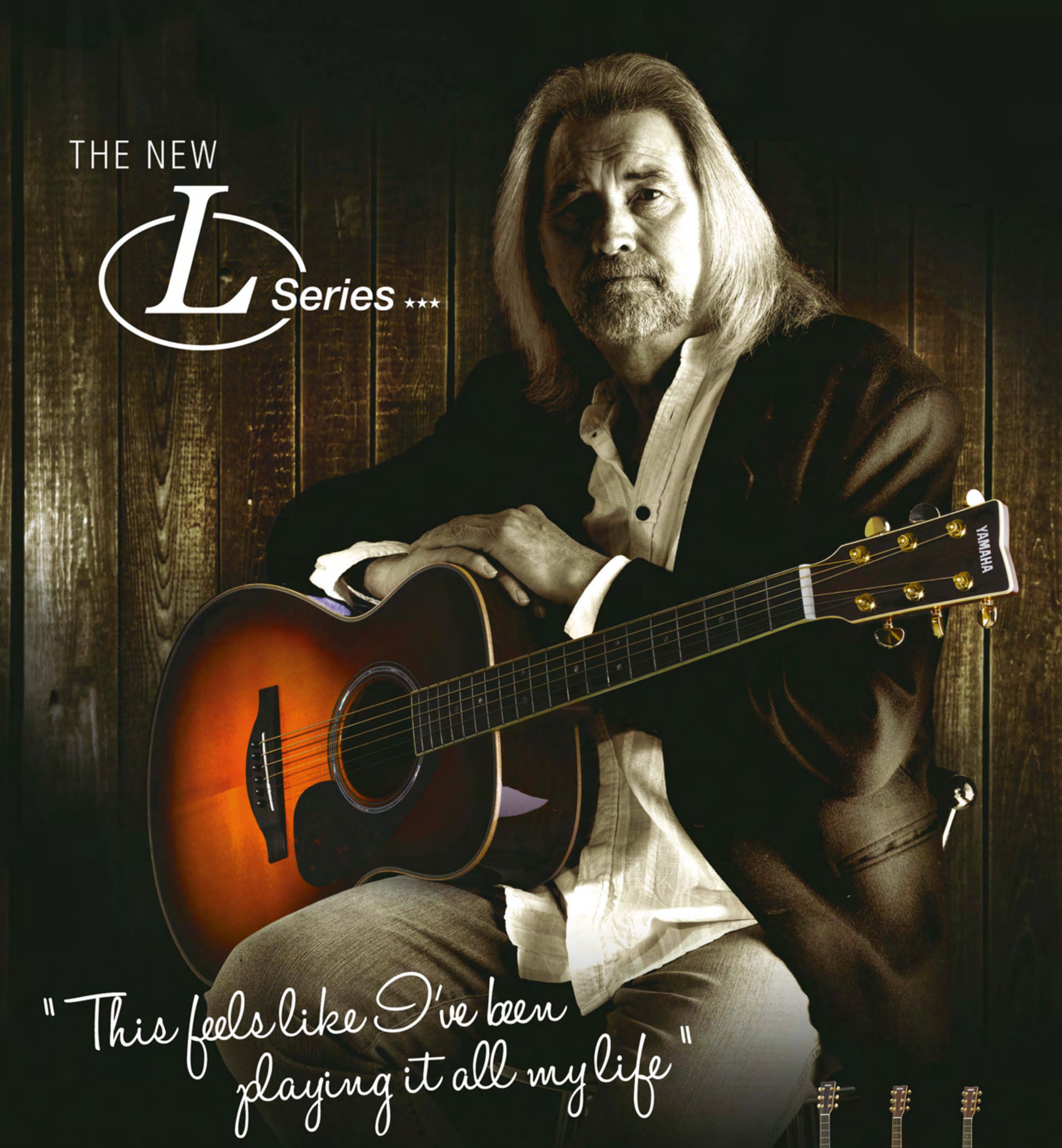
What about the home collection of guitars – is every flat surface given up to a six-string beauty? 'It's not as bad as it has been,' Scott responds with a smile. 'I think the most I have ever had has been around 13. I'm never going to match Jimmy Page's 1,000 guitars. I have got it down to about six now. I have got a 1961 Harmony Sovereign which is one of the rare ones with the pickup in the base of the neck, and I picked that up from a newspaper advert for about £45. I used that on 'Elusive'; that was the guitar for that song – it was just one of those meant-to-be moments which don't come up that often.'

'Working at home, I am learning the science of matching microphones and pre-amp combinations, and knowing the character of each instrument, which is a bit of a science in itself. Some guitars hate microphones – and vice versa. I have been trying a three-mic set up with one in the middle, and a pair of Octavers as a stereo pair, but I have found that sometimes, too much can spoil the effect I am after. I am going for one mic for the guitar and one for the vocal, or just one to pick up the guitar and the vocal. I am trying to concentrate more on the performance than the technical aspects around it. It's all about trial and error. I am a fan of the simplistic approach because sometimes that is what draws you in more than an over-produced sound. Some of my favourite records, like Elliot Smith's first two albums, were recorded on an old Portastudio and that really shines through with the effect of the songs.'

'I'm at the stage now, after 10 years of touring, where I can more or less plug in and play. The things I have had big issues with are acoustic guitar pickups and DI boxes. I have tried various things over the years, and I have now got it down to these LA Audio boxes which, for me, replicate the sound the K&K pickups I use as closely as I'm going to get. Around two years ago, I was still at the point of having two-hour sound checks and lots of head scratching from engineers. I had three DI boxes set up, and then I had a special box made for me by a guy from Bright Onion Pedals who lives in Brighton and makes custom pedals. I heard of him through a friend of mine called Ian Shepherd who techs for Robert Plant, he got me in touch with this guy called James Murphy at Bright Onion and he made me a switcher box with an ABC switch on it. Whatever is active, I can activate a separate send from that into my pedal board that then goes into a guitar amp as well. So the front-of-house has a clean signal from the acoustic, and then there is a second feed to the guitar amp which I can use to bring my effects in. That gives me two signals to work with, and I get the clean effect off a DI signal, and the versatile sound of a guitar amp as well. With that control I can stop worrying about the sound in the room and start delivering the variety of the songs.'

With *Home Part 1* due to be released on November 10, Scott has been playing gigs in and around the capital, but one other thing on his mind is custom acoustics. 'Oh yes, it is something that is very much on my mind at the moment. There is a luthier in Cleobury Mortimer called Russ Wootton, and he makes lovely guitars. I am talking to a number of people, but I haven't committed to anything yet; it is something for the future. I would like to work closely with someone who can understand the kind of voice I am looking for in a guitar, maybe an OM size model.'

Scott Matthews'* Home Part 1 *is out on November 10. Scott plays live dates throughout the rest of 2014, check his website for details.
www.scottmatthewsmusic.co.uk



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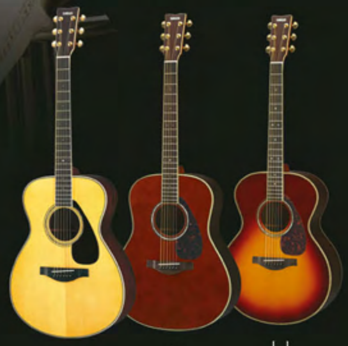

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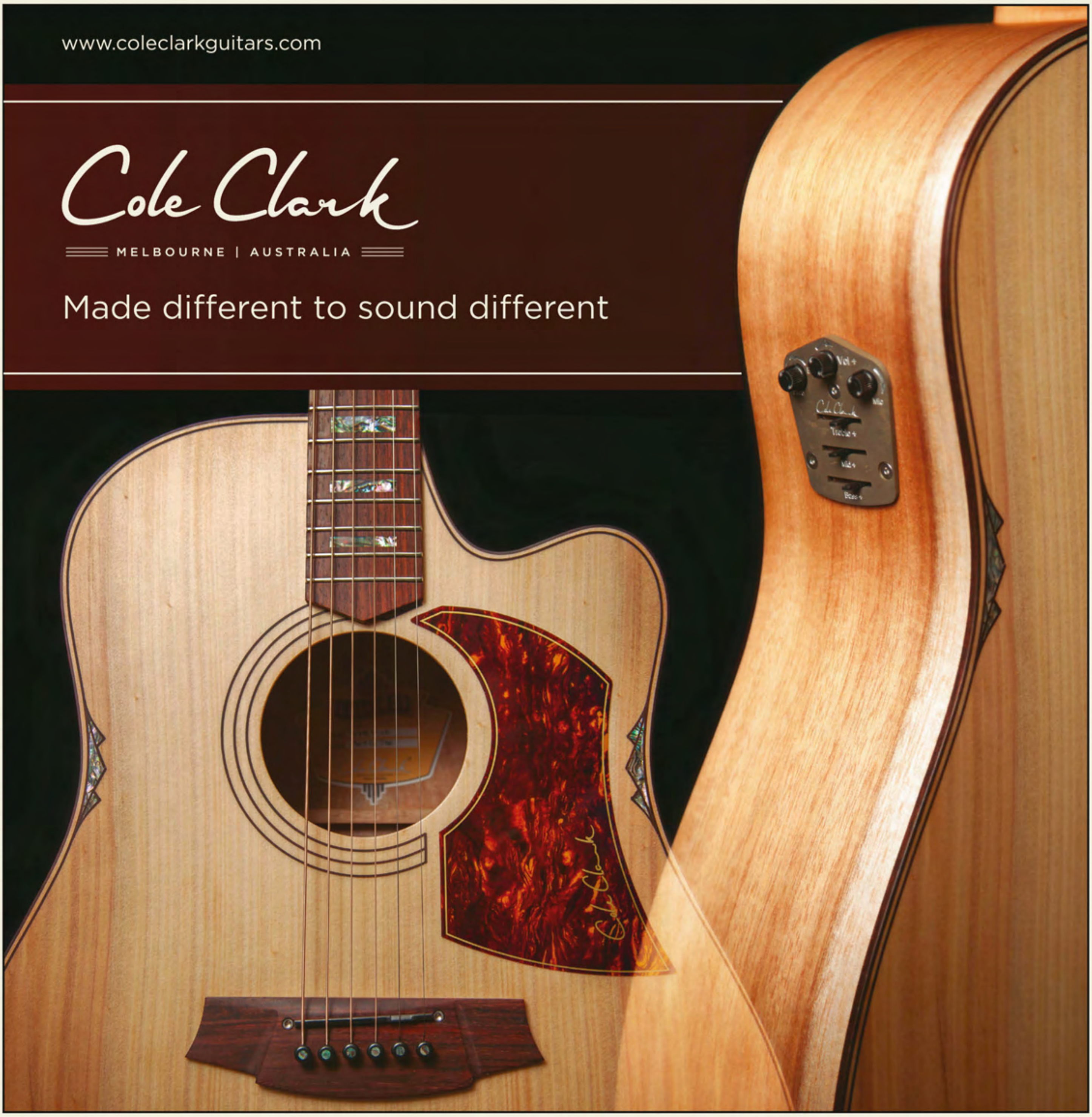

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QUO-VER

WORDS: JOEL MCIVER PHOTOS: DANNY CLIFFORD

Status Quo are back, we tell you, back, with an acoustic album called Aquostic. Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt wax lyrical with Acoustic on the "Rolls-Royce of acoustics", the perils of playing too hard – and "phallic" album titles...

AND (NOT) OUT

Francis Rossi, Status Quo singer and sometime ponytail-wearer, does not mince his words.

'*Aquostic* is a stupid name, isn't it? But our manager is good at stuff like that. I would have called it *Acoustiquo* myself, but it's marketing, and I stay out of all that these days. It's not like it was when we were younger, when you had album covers and people would stare at them for hours over a joint: nowadays you have a quick look at the front and the back and that's it.'

Rossi has been pondering our interview slot, he tells us. 'I was thinking last night about you asking me about which acoustic guitars we used on this new album. But I don't fucking know the answer, ha ha! I used an Ibanez that I got in the late 70s, but I don't know what model it is. I've got a Washburn too, and I bought a little parlour Guild recently. We also used a couple of big blonde Gibsons. There were some Fenders and Takamines too, and the problem now is which ones to use live, because it's a different situation. Anyway, do you like the album?'

I do, I tell him. I love the clever rearrangements of the old tunes – 24 of them on the expanded edition of *Aquostic*, out as you read this – and the fact that he and his partner-in-Quo Rick Parfitt don't sound like they've just phoned their performances in.

'Well, I didn't want to do this album too much – but wow, I enjoyed doing it!' Rossi replies. 'It was talked about a few years ago, but I was all, "Not really, I'm getting on, I want to slow down" and all that. But then we did a TV ad in Australia with an acoustic version of 'Down Down': that version is actually very similar to the one that ended up on the record. We were all enamoured of it. They did it in a film studio where it was in the round, like a mock-up of that thing that Elvis Presley did years ago that everyone talked about [Elvis's 1968 'Comeback Special'] and our manager must have been thinking, "I have to coerce these fuckers into this somehow". But once I started recording the acoustic songs I thought it was great. I really enjoyed doing it, I must say. I don't really know where we'd go with a regular rock album any more, so this was a good way to revisit some of the nicer songs and remember all the reasons why I loved them. I didn't much like 'Drive My Car' before, but the version we've done is phenomenal.'

Warming to his subject, Rossi – a die-hard Fender Telecaster player to millions – reveals that acoustic guitars have been at the heart of Quo all along. 'Most of these songs were written on acoustic anyway, or one or two on piano: it's very rare that anything was written on an electric guitar,' he explains. 'When you're playing an acoustic, it's all going on: you kind of imagine the drums in the downbeats and the backbeats in the strumming patterns. Transfer that to the electric, with chords made of root and fifth, and it's kind of... oh. You have to add stuff to pad out the melody.'

"We had eight billion tracks to choose from, and it was no mean feat to get it down to the 25 that made it. There are a few in there that will surprise people."

You may or may not notice that some cunning downtuning has taken place in *Aquostic*, primarily to give Rossi's voice a break. 'In the 70s we used to pitch the songs as high as possible, and sometimes that worked very well,' he muses, 'but 'Rockin' All Over The World' was too high for me up there, so we took it down a tone. I think my voice improved. Nine out of 10 of the guide tracks on *Aquostic* ended up being the master tracks. In, out, done. I really enjoyed it!'

The exercise of transferring the songs to acoustic has had a long-term impact, he says. 'After this, I thought, "Jesus, I need to play acoustic more often!" Your grip changes, and the fingering changes, so I now practise a lot on this little Guild. Playing solos on acoustic is hard, but it's very good for the fingers and the hands, so I try to do that a lot. It's a really great discipline.'

When we catch up with Rick Parfitt at his home in Spain, he sounds upbeat and positive – which is welcome, as this summer Quo were obliged to cancel some dates after he suffered a health scare. But he's fine, he tells us, and in fact rather better than fine. 'I'm the best I've ever been, thank you for asking,' he smiles. 'That little incident I had, I needed to have it – it's the best thing that's ever happened to me. It's kicked me into gear and I've given up drinking and smoking. I'm a boring old fucker now, but at least I feel healthy and I wake up every morning thinking "Yeah!" instead of "Oh no!"'

Like Rossi, Parfitt had issues with the title of *Aquostic*: as he says, 'It kept conjuring up something phallic in my mind – like "A Quo Stick"...' but also like his long-term colleague, he's delighted with the music. 'The general vibe of the album is very good, I'm really pleased with it. It's been on the cards for quite a long time, so we finally went ahead and put it together. We had eight billion tracks to choose from, and it was no mean feat to get it down to the 25 tracks that made it on there. I live in Marbella, so I wasn't there when they picked the tracks, but there are a few things in there that will surprise people.'

Asked where the new arrangements of the songs came from, and he tells us: 'You just sit in a circle and throw ideas in, and you know the old adage: if you throw enough of them in, something will stick and someone will eventually come up with something that works in a process of trial and error. You think "That surely won't work?" but then it really comes to life, and that's part of the charm of it. 'Don't Drive My Car' in particular sounds like Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli. If that got played by Chris Evans on his Radio 2 morning show and he asked his listeners to say who the song was by, I doubt that the general public would get that it was us, because it's so far removed from what we do – although Quo fans would get it of course.'

"Aquostic is a stupid name, isn't it? But our manager is good at stuff like that. I would have called it Acoustiquo, but it's marketing, and I stay out of all that..."

Some of the vibes are indeed pretty new for Quo, who dip into country, folk and blues sounds on the album. 'I think the accordion works incredibly well,' Parfitt says. 'It blends so well, although I would have said "Hmm" if someone had told me that we were going to have one on our album. It's such a joyous instrument, though, isn't it? We had so many guitars to choose from, from miniature basses to mandolins to ukuleles. It was just a case of "Let's try this and see if it works... no, let's try that!"'

He encountered more than a few problems in the studio, he recalls. 'I often hit the guitar body with my pick when I'm playing an electric with a little bit of force, and of course if you do that on an acoustic, you can hear it. The engineer said to me, "Can you please stop hitting the body?" and I said, "I'll try, but I've been playing this way for 50 years!" It was a difficult process: I ended up putting gaffa tape and padding on the body. You get different dynamics on an acoustic as opposed to an electric, plus there's the fact that your arm's got to go around it, not just straight down over it. The body is six inches thicker than my usual Telecaster, so you have to apply different muscles to the acoustic, and you feel like you need a break after playing it for an hour because your shoulder is killing you! That was a little bit of a problem.'

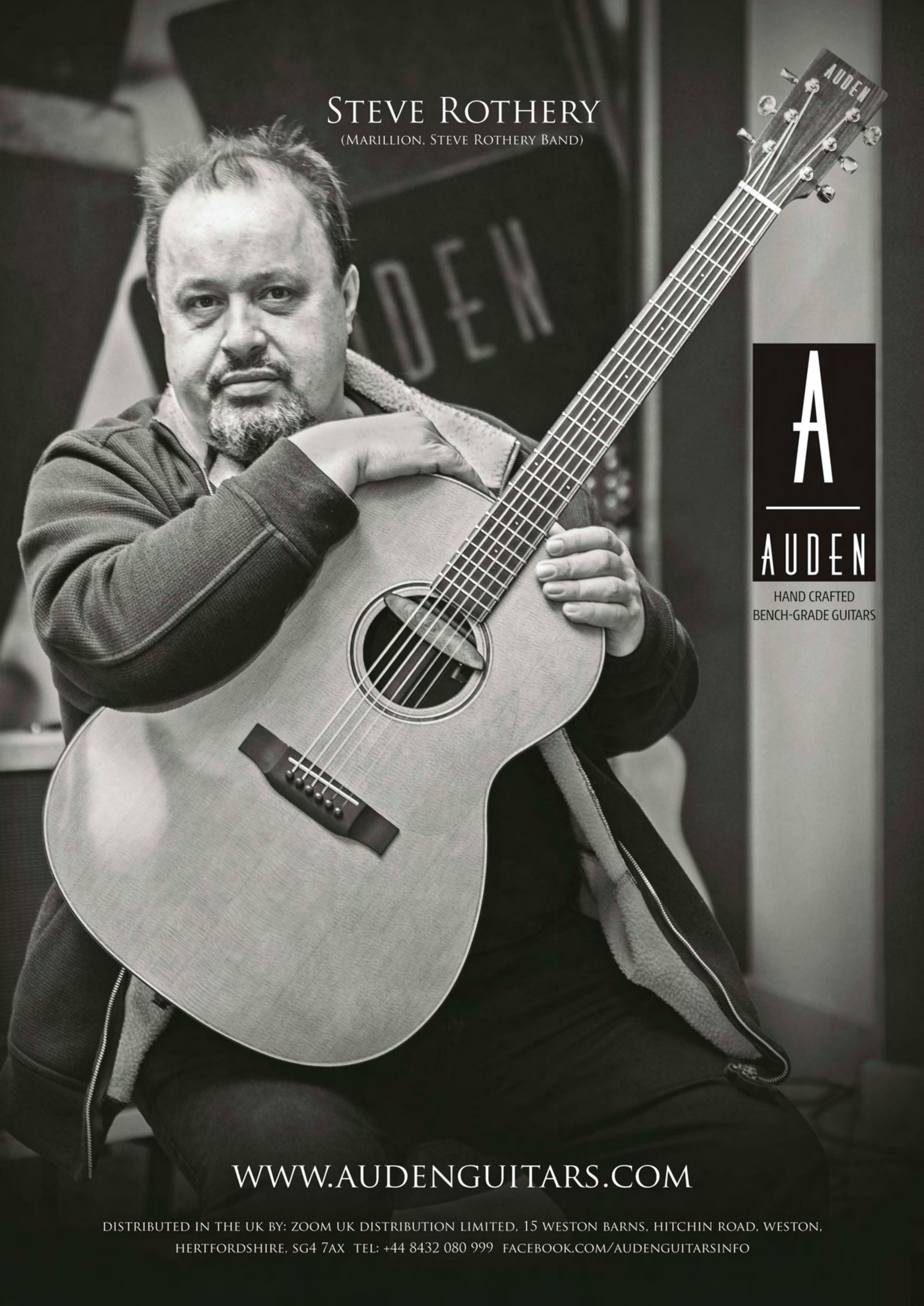
Parfitt adds: 'I just bought a Gibson J-200 off a mate of mine, it's a very special guitar. It plays beautifully: it's the Rolls-Royce of Gibson acoustics, really. I've used it on quite a lot of tracks, along with quite a few guitars that I've never really played in anger before, as it were! Usually you tend to

play the acoustic when you're sitting in your lounge at night and you've had a couple of bottles of wine, and you're singing old Ken Dodd songs – so to actually get to grips with one and use it properly was wonderful.'

Do Quo have high hopes for the new acoustic direction? Rossi, for one, is beyond caring what critics think. 'Most of the press was derogatory about us in the early days, but what that made us do was dig in and try even harder,' he chuckles. 'If they'd hailed us as the new messiahs, we'd probably have done an Amy Wineberg [sic] and drunk ourselves to death or whatever. She believed her own PR instead of realising that she was the same insecure person who needs to go on stage and sing, which is what I believe we all are. Otherwise we couldn't go on that stage.'

Any famous last words? 'We love to be elitist about music and intellectualise the notes, but it's the same fucking 12 notes every time, isn't it?'

Aquostic *is out now.* *www.statusquo.co.uk*



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BACK UP THE JUNCTION

WORDS: ANDY HUGHES IMAGES: RICHARD ECCLESTONE

*For the first time in 20 years, Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford will be joining forces as a duo to head out on a run of sold out UK shows – **The At Odds Couple Tour** – to celebrate four decades of making music together. **Acoustic** caught up with two of the coolest cats in the business at the **London Acoustic Guitar Show** to talk about songwriting, fame after 40 years, and new Squeeze material.*

For the first time in almost 20 years, Squeeze's Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook will be heading out on the road as a duo with The At Odds Couple Tour that will see them present their songs and story in a unique way. Beginning at the Cambridge Corn Exchange on 2 November, the sold out 12-date tour will visit theatres around the UK in a show that will celebrate their enduring music and partnership. Chris Difford's lyrics and Glenn Tilbrook's music have prevailed through turbulent times over the past four decades, from the ever-changing musical landscape to their own internal reshuffles and an acrimonious break-up. After the initial rush of success in the late 70s with hits like 'Cool For Cats' and 'Up The Junction', Squeeze was widely considered to be one of the finest pop bands in Britain.

After break ups and solo endeavours, Squeeze is back together, writing new music, and feeling refreshed – but The At Odds Couple Tour serves to demonstrate the core of the partnership that gave us some of the most unassuming pop hits of the last 40 years, which are still cherished and sung word perfect today. Together, Glenn and Chris represent one of the finest songwriting partnerships the UK has ever produced.

Backstage at the London Acoustic Guitar Show, straight after their barnstorming performance on the main stage giving us a glimpse of what to expect from their duo tour, Chris and Glenn adjourned to talk about writing together, guitars, and their enduring professional and personal relationship.

The conversation opened with discussion about the writing process, which has been delineated more or less from day one – the stories that Chris Difford penned would have been redundant without the lively interpretations of Glenn Tilbrook's music.

'I think as we get older, we have started to be more open about the discussion of writing. I think there was a big turning point when we both began making solo albums, and because Glenn is a lyricist in his own right. Now when we collaborate, we work a little bit more on that, we have come more towards the middle. But for many years, it was an unspoken agreement that the lyrics would arrive and then the music would be written, which is a fantastic way to work because there is such a thrill in hearing the finished song. I remember back in the days of cassettes, Glenn would hand me a tape with 10 or 12 finished demos of songs, which would usually be more or less how the songs ended up. It was always a huge thrill to slot the cassette into the car player and have a listen,' Chris says.

'It is such a gift, Glenn agrees. 'I had written lyrics on my own before I met Chris, but his lyrics were always so great and mine... were not! It was a privilege to have his lyrics to

work with. I think it felt pretty natural for both of us to fall into those roles and to carry on. What was remarkable was that we never even discussed it – it just felt like that was how it was meant to be. We have had those discussions, more in this incarnation than we probably ever did before, and I think that's a good thing – it's a sign of rude health in our relationship.'

Despite Glenn and Chris' professional relationship always working sublimely for the best part of their careers, the personal relationship between that two has not always been as smooth – although time, age, and experience has evidently relaxed the two.

'I think we have turned a corner in the last five or 10 years since we got back together. The object of what we did at the beginning of this incarnation of Squeeze was to create our own museum of our past, and make it sound great, and repackage it, which Glenn did brilliantly with the *Spot The Difference* album where we played our own songs to own our copyrights. By turning that corner, and playing to audiences with a fantastic new set – with some new songs as well as old songs – it has grown some confidence in our friendship,' says Chris. 'I think you can see it in other established bands. They have lost the ability to communicate, and the courage disappears. You can see it in older bands when they go on the road and you don't get that passion. Glenn and I feel that there has to be that passion in music, because we have got so much of it.'

Tilbrook's guitar playing has always had a dose of joie de vivre evident in it, but Glenn laughs it off claiming to have always been a shy guitarist.

'I never played a huge amount on most of the Squeeze records, and where I did play, I wanted to make it count, and not just play for the sake of it. My playing is based on blues influences – and we don't really play blues music. My style is probably a country hybrid. I am very influenced by Albert Lee – I'd love to be able to play like him.'

'I used to be very shy of playing,' Chris says. 'I didn't have the confidence to play the acoustic or the electric, and there was a long period of just getting by. It was about 15 years ago that I finally decided that playing guitar was something that I had done all my life, and I needed to get it right. It's like being a carpenter and only being able to put up shelves, it's not good enough – you need to be able to do the whole thing. So I decided to work on my playing and since then I have been really enjoying it a lot more.'

'I was saying to Chris just after our set [at the London Acoustic Guitar Show in which they both demonstrated a mastery of their instruments] that his playing has been amazing,' Glenn reflects. 'You know when someone has improved at something, it's not always a gradual improvement, sometimes it just clicks and there is a brand new door that is open to you with a whole range of new options on the other side of it. That's what it feels like hearing Chris play, and it's great to hear what he is doing, and it's wonderful to play beside him now. Chris is feeling the music properly now, he feels everything in the rhythm and the structure, and it obviously feels very natural these days.'

Aside from the Novello-earning writing skills of the pair, they are both blessed with highly distinctive voices. As they harmonise octaves apart from each other, when the two sing together there's no mistaking it's Tilbrook and Difford.

'We didn't start singing together straight away,' Chris says. 'I think it was 'Take Me I'm Yours' that was the beginning of us singing together in recording terms, and then it became a bit of a signature for us, and it is a great sound – not a lot of bands have that.'

no room for that. But Glenn has an incredible talent for playing the guitar, and I have seen it again most recently when I got married – Glenn played 'Hercules' and I just thought, "Wow". It made my day! It's exciting, and I'd like the audience to experience more of it, and I think we can do that now – I think we have more room in the band to move.'

'Squeeze songs are all very structured,' adds Glenn. 'They tell a story with a beginning and a middle and an end, and that format dictates the style and the amount of guitar I can play. When jazz goes off on musical tangents, as a musician, I can really go with that, but when we make records with Squeeze, the song has to come first. The song and the story are what matters, and the guitar playing is always going to be secondary to that. I do enjoy playing, and as Chris has said, we are starting to stretch some of our songs out a little more now when we play them on stage, so that is going to give me a chance to get into some more guitar playing.'

Pop luminaries who started their writing and playing journey back in the 1970s, Chris and Glenn have succeeded without the use of social media. A band like Squeeze got music out to their fans not by the click of a button, but by putting the gear in the van and touring relentlessly. Is the simplicity of promotion in a digital age a help or hindrance?

'Well, I saw something a few days ago that really upset me,' Chris replies. 'I was watching the Apple stream of the new iPhone. They did this weird thing at the end where U2 came on and said that they were giving away their new album. What are they telling people, by giving away their album? Are they saying that

You'll notice Glenn and Chris clutching an Avalon and Olson acoustic, respectively, on the cover of this issue. Aside from those, what guitars will we find on the stand?

'I have a 1930s Gibson acoustic which I use a lot in the studio – it's a lovely small-bodied guitar and I do a lot of recording with it,' says Glenn. 'The Avalon that I used on stage today is one of my favourite guitars for live work – I just love using that. There comes a stage with guitars when they settle down, and I have had the Avalon for nearly 10 years, and this is the right time now – it is lovely to play. I also use Taylor and Yamaha guitars, both of which I really enjoy using. The spacing is slightly different on the Avalon, slightly wider frets, and I guess my fingers have got a bit porkier, so it feels a little bit better,' he laughs.

'I have, over the years, broken the scaphoid bone in my wrist, so having a guitar with a smaller neck is important for me,' Chris adds. 'I play a Taylor 610 which is one of the original Taylors, and that feels great. Recently, I have been playing a guitar made by Jim Olson from Minneapolis. I first heard one of his guitars being played by James Taylor. I went to see James play, and I went backstage and met him, and just drooled over his guitar. So I ordered one, and it took ages to come through, about a year, and I played it, and thought: "Why doesn't it sound like James' guitar?" And then I realised, it's because I can't play like James! Now I am watching his stuff online [he also uploads tutorials of his hits] and the sound of the guitar is very sweet.'

'There are never any bum notes when Glenn plays – it's extraordinary listening to him play,' Chris continues. 'I remember, years ago, when we used to rehearse in a place called Wood Wharf in Greenwich, and we used to extend the songs beyond belief in order to get a feel for how they were going to work, and Glenn would sometimes play for ages, and that's a talent that doesn't reveal itself in the songs we do because they are too short – there is

music is for free, which makes it harder for young people to come up the ladder? And then I listened to it… and realised why they are giving it away!'

'I think that people who like your music, and who come to you, want to help out, they want so support you and they want to buy your music,' Glenn reasons. 'That is important, but the other thing that is important about music is reaching the people who are not that interested in you, and I think that increasing those chances for us is important. We weren't getting radio play when we started, and now the stuff is out there. People who heard us play today [at the London Acoustic Guitar Show] can go and find our music, and if they like it, they can buy our records.'

'We had a period of two or three years where we weren't doing much, and I felt that success made us complacent in some ways, and it affected the way that we worked. We got a little bit too pleased with ourselves. This is my retrospective judgement on it; at the time it just didn't feel right,' Glenn adds.

With a facial expression suggesting an unpleasant memory, Glenn recalls a bout of writer's block. 'I think it happened at one specific time for me, around the time we got massive in the States. It was scary, and I have had a few times like that since. One of the things I have learned about writing is that although it is a natural thing to do, it doesn't mean that it will always be easy. It doesn't mean that you won't have really frustrating periods. It's like walking – you don't forget how to do it. You do forget how hard it is sometimes, though. A lot of great stuff comes from a single moment at a single time that you grab hold of and expand on, but a lot of other great stuff comes from long tortuous periods of hard work, revising, and getting it how you want it. The thing I know about writing is that it can be easy, or hard, and the result can be great, or it can be rubbish. You never know how many doors you need to walk through to arrive in the right room. I know what's at the other side, and I know it might be hard to get there, but I know I will get there.'

'I never worried about Glenn getting past the time when the music was not coming easily to him,' says Chris. 'I know that some songs take longer than others, and that there is no rush – especially now. You have to produce what you can produce in that particular space and time, and if there isn't anything, then you go back again at a later time.'

'We do a lot of looking back when we play on stage,' says Glenn, 'and that is fine, I am very proud of our past, I love and respect it deeply. But our past is not going to sustain us as a band, we need to be looking forward and moving forward; we have always created our own momentum as a band, and that has not changed.'

So it's good news from Chris, then, that there is a new musical project under way, which will result in a new album and tour schedule for 2015. 'Yes, we are working on a new album, and it is inspired by, and based on, a TV show written by Danny Baker and Jeff Pope. It's from Danny's book *Going To Sea In A Sieve*, but we've retitled it *Cradle To The Grave*, and it's being shot between March and May next year, and it will be on air in October 2015.'

A Tilbrook and Difford concert is a reminder of just how massive Squeeze was from 1979 through to 1987, and how influential they continue to be as a songwriting tour de force. Hit after hit they come – the Lennon and McCartney comparisons aren't so crazy now, are they?

Glenn and Chris tour the UK throughout November on the At Odds Couple Tour. A new album from Squeeze is expected in 2015.
www.squeezeofficial.com

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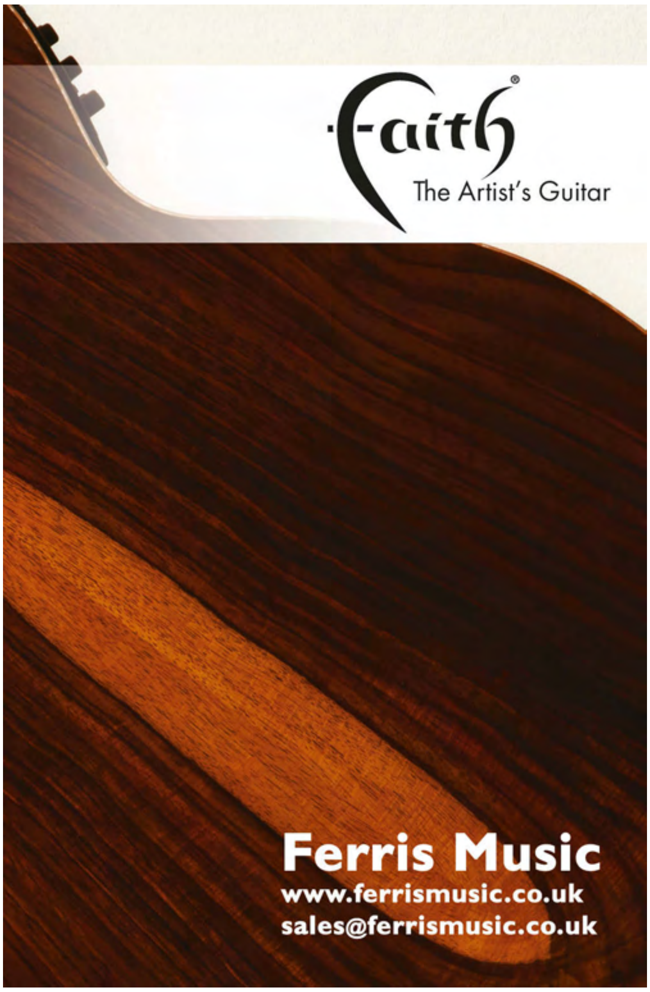

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APP EXTRA
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LAME HORSE LH14

Small body, big tone – meet the Lame Horse LH14 Lorena. **Richard Thomas** takes a look at a hand built offering from father and son team, Chris and Jeremy Jenkins of Lame Horse Instruments.

Lame Horse Instruments is a Texan family business, run by father and son, Chris and Jeremy Jenkins. Unusually, although they work together on building instruments, they actually have separate facilities 200 miles apart in Mansfield and Austin. Despite the distance between them, they work on instruments together, shipping parts between the workshops. Chris and Jeremy build a small range of guitars and banjos, some inspired by traditional, classic instruments, while others have a much more contemporary design. However, as we will see later in the review, even those vintage-inspired guitars are far from being simply clones of "golden era" instruments. To quote the Jenkins team: 'We use the great traditions of guitar making and expand our boundaries using new ideas, materials and tools made available to us today, to accomplish this mission. All the great luthiers of the past used everything at their disposal to create the best instruments possible. They did not create great instruments by being tied to using only the materials, designs and tools of the past. It is absurd to think that any good luthier today would strive to do anything less.'

BUILD QUALITY

The Lame Horse LH14 is an example of the vintage-inspired designs turned out by Chris and Jeremy. Dubbed "Lorena", it's a little less restrained in appearance than its sibling, "Sexie Sadie", which has a darker, more traditional appearance, and clearly draws inspiration from the classic Gibson L00, beloved of so many blues and ragtime players, and singer-songwriters like Rodney Crowell. I confess that I'm a sucker for a good sunburst. I tend to prefer the darker, tobacco sunbursts found on many vintage guitars (and on this guitar's "Sexy Sadie" stablemate), but I'm not unhappy with a good cherry sunburst and the LH14's is as good as it gets, lending the guitar something of a 60s vibe. I'm not a big fan of large scratchplates, but the Lorena's thin white plate is a perfect complement for this design, mirroring the guitar's curves appropriately and adding a touch of originality. Decoration is restrained, with simple black and white purfling around the edge of the top, while the rosette comprises an abalone ring, with a little more purfling. The edge of the soundhole is bound with figured sapele – a classy touch that emphasises the attention to detail found in every aspect of the build of this instrument. Underneath the sunburst is a premium quality Engelmann spruce top, bound with flamed maple, while the back and sides are made from similarly high quality sapele. Guitar makers are increasingly seeking alternatives to South American mahogany and sapele is a wood that many have found to be a more than acceptable substitute. It has a slightly higher density, typically, making it fractionally heavier, but has a tone that is similar. The bridge has an original design and is fashioned from rosewood. The bridge pins are made from ebony and are decorated with small silver dots.

The bound ebony fingerboard sports a Lame Horse inlay at the first fret and a silver star at the 17th fret. This star is more than simply decoration. It actually masks one of two bolts that are part of one of the innovative features of this guitar – an adjustable neck. The seven-piece neck is a laminate of mahogany and curly maple, with thin strips of diamond wood. The front of the headstock is faced in quilted sapele and features a white truss-rod cover, while the back is faced in curly maple, to match the neck. The headstock itself is a large flared affair, reminiscent of something like a Grammer and takes a little getting used to. I'm not quite sure that I actually did. The Grover tuners and neatly finished bone nut and saddle all add to the overall impression of a high quality instrument, but this instrument is far from being simply a high-end vintage reproduction. A peek inside the body reveals that the sides are laminated with curly maple and the back features a double X-bracing system, with the first X-brace capped with mahogany. I've played a few guitars with

LAME HORSE LH14

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Lame Horse Instruments
Model: LH14 Lorena
Retail Price: £5,500
Body Size: Small-bodied slope shouldered
Made In: Texas, USA
Top: Engelmann spruce
Back and Sides: Sapele
Neck: Mahogany and maple laminate
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 21
Tuners: Grover open-back
Nut Width: 1.65"
Scale Length: 25"
Onboard Electronics: Optional
Left Handers: To order
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hardshell case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Truly wonderful tone and build quality. Huge tone in a modestly-sized package
Cons: I'm not sure that the aesthetic of this particular instrument would be for everyone
Overall: A great small-bodied instrument with big tone

ACOUSTIC RATING

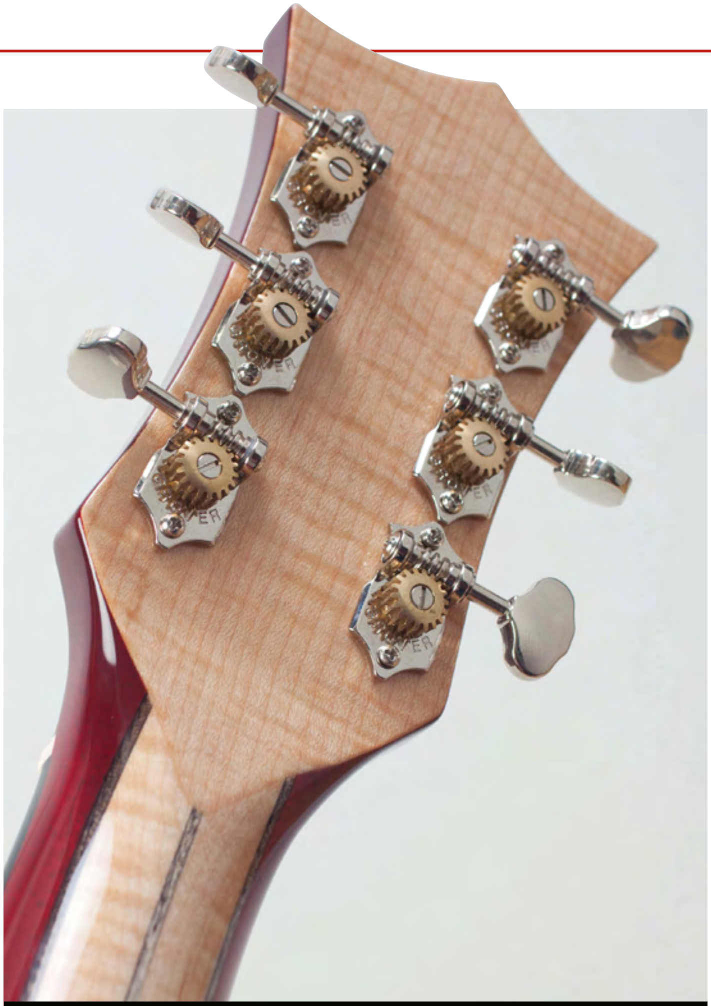
Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money	✪✪✪✪

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

The North American Guitar
www.thenorthamericanguitar.com

The Lorena is an engaging strummer – perfect for the singer-songwriter


The headstock is a large flared affair, a little reminiscent of a Grammer

X-braced backs before and they've all been responsive instruments. The interior is also home to two good luck charms – a duck and a horse, fashioned in turquoise.

The Lorena is set up ready for installation of onboard electronics, with a jack plug mounted in a removable quilted sapele panel. Adjustable necks are a feature that we're starting to see on acoustics now – Mike Baranik's Meridian, for example – and the Lame Horse has just such a feature. The neck angle can be adjusted slightly under string tension, pivoting about the neck joint and adjusted via a small hole below the heel.

SOUND QUALITY

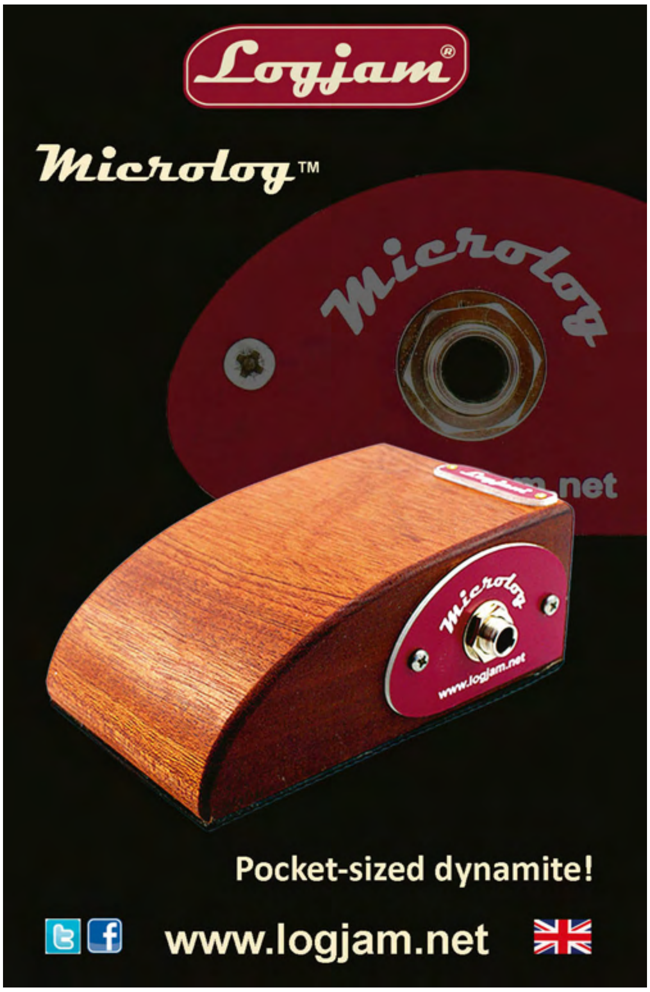
With its 1.65" nut width and shorter scale length, the LH14 is effortlessly playable, with a perfect set up. I suppose that most of us approaching an instrument with this sort of vintage aesthetic might have a certain expectation of what to expect from the sound, particularly if we've played a vintage L00 or one of the more modern versions of the design. However, I have to say that my preconceptions were totally negated almost instantly. It's a fingerpicker's dream, loud and clear, with excellent separation. It has some of the dry, woodiness of mahogany, but with a richer mid-range than I would normally associate with relatively small-bodied mahogany guitars. The bass is firm and well-articulated, nothing like the round, rubbery bass that one sometimes finds with the instruments that have clearly inspired this guitar. Trebles are fat and solid and there's a great dynamic range, with the guitar responding equally well to a light touch or to the player really digging in. Engelmann spruce is sometimes regarded as having less "headroom" than other spruces but there was little evidence of that here. Overall, it's well balanced across the tonal range, with none of the boxiness you can often find in small-bodied instruments. Perhaps inevitably, I found myself trotting out tried and tested blues licks, at which the guitar excels, but I also really enjoyed playing little fingerstyle arrangements of American gospel songs, country and even a little bluegrass. The Lorena is also an engaging strummer too and be a perfect foil for the singer-songwriter.

The interior of Lorena is home to two good luck charms – a duck and a horse

CONCLUSION

Let me be honest, my heart sunk somewhat when I first picked the guitar up in the TNAG showroom. It really didn't look like my sort of thing at all. I was extremely dubious about the design and I found all my prejudices coming to the fore. Who on earth would want a guitar like this? Well, to my great surprise, it turned out that I would. I absolutely loved it and it was with a mixture of relief and disappointment that I realised the £5,500 asking price meant that I would have to choose between the guitar and paying for my daughter's university education. It was a close-run thing. I've never really been a fan of smaller-bodied guitars, but the Lorena won my heart and I'm delighted to say that my prejudices in this respect have been seriously challenged. So the question is – is the Lame Horse really lame? I think not – for my money this thoroughbred is a winner.

Richard Thomas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SHADOW PANAMAG WIRELESS SYSTEM

Shadow Electronics has introduced a soundhole pickup with a built-in wireless transmitter for the acoustic guitar – **David Mead** drops the cables and gives it the runaround…

Electric guitar players have been enjoying the liberty that comes hand-in-hand with wireless technology for many years. Being suddenly cut loose from the restraints of an umbilical guitar cable has lead to a lot of dashing around on the stadium stages of the word over the past 25 years or so. It's been a long time coming, but now Shadow is introducing a special all-in-one pickup system for acoustic players that might mean a lot more freedom for us, too.

FEATURES

The PanaMag comes with a power supply, magnetic soundhole unit and base receiver, very similar to the system for electric guitar players except for the fact that the pickup and transmitter is a single integrated unit. Shadow has opted for a one size fits all idea, promising a comfy fit for soundholes measuring from 96mm to 106mm. Naturally, if your acoustic guitar doesn't happen to have a circular hole in its soundboard, like Yamaha's APX range or any of the Maccaferri lookalikes for instance, you're going to miss out. But I would hazard a guess that probably 90 per cent of the acoustics on the market would be in the running.

The unit itself comprises a magnetic soundhole pickup with a rechargeable battery, stereo operation, separate controls for treble, bass, pan – which we'll come to later on – and volume. You charge the battery via a mini USB on the unit's front and the Li-ion

will keep you fully powered up for up to six hours. There's even a dedicated on-board tuner so that everything you need is really just under your fingertips.

Individual screws either side of the pickup itself will adjust the height so, in theory, all you have to do is charge up the battery, put the unit into your guitar's soundhole, switch it on and you're good to go. The other side of the operation is the base unit. This looks like any wireless system you've seen in the past. Powered by a separate mains adaptor, the front panel has a pairing switch on the left hand side and an output to recharge the transmitter at the same time that the base unit is in play, plus power switch on the right.

As far as audio outputs are concerned, the rear panel has mono, stereo and even S/PDIF optical digital relays and so just about every option is catered for. A 5v DC power in mini USB completes the facilities and so everything looks pretty simple and straightforward. But, of course, I've got to fit the transmitter into a guitar next...

IN USE

I've admitted in the past that anything to do with DIY on guitars fills me with a sort of phobic dread, but I have to say that the Shadow's idea of simply dropping into your soundhole sounds like something even I can do without too much trouble. The idea is that there is a soft, pliable foam band around the circumference of the transmitter and if your soundhole happens to be on the large side, you merely increase the unit's diameter with some more of the same. I'm slightly dubious about anything that hasn't been securely tied down to the guitar body itself, but I'm happy to be overruled if it works.

I opted to fit the PanaMag to my Vintage Gordon Giltrap signature guitar and, despite my reservations, it really was a simple job. All I had to do was slacken off the strings and slip the unit into place in the soundhole. To be honest, it's not a perfect fit and if I was considering this to be a permanent fixture I would have resorted to using some of the extra tape Shadow supply to make a better job of it. But it's certainly good enough for now.

Next job was to input the receiver to my amp, which was a simple job of plugging it into the mains supply, attaching it to an input with an ordinary cable and switching it on. When you turn the transmitter on, a blue light on the front of the pickup flashes until a connection is achieved. This was immediate and within a couple of minutes from opening the box, I was wirelessly strumming my guitar.

Shadow say me that there is a 30m range – something that was difficult to test within the confines of a city centre flat, but I was certainly able to wander about, unhindered by a cable. I lost signal once, but I think that was due to the somewhat labyrinthine nature of my humble abode and its thick concrete walls – something you wouldn't encounter in the average gig venue, I suspect!

As far as comparing the wireless signal against using a lead, there is definitely a little more hiss from the PanaMag. It's difficult to put a figure on it without a more scientific approach to testing, but the amount was within acceptable parameters to my ears.

I also wasn't able to explore another function of the Shadow – its stereo capabilities. Alas, I have only a mono amp, but I would imagine that accessing a stereo input through a PA and using the system's onboard panoramic controls and separate EQ would act as the cherry on the cake to an otherwise worthwhile experience.

CONCLUSION

If I were going to use this unit professionally, I would spend more time tweaking it to get the best possible EQ, pickup height, and soundhole fit from it. From what I experienced, there is certainly enough scope to get the sound you want with little fuss. If I have any reservations at all, I would say that six hours of life in the battery is possibly a little on the short side, especially when you compare it to the average piezo system where a PP3 battery will last considerably longer. If you add up a couple of hour long sets, a soundcheck and so on, you'd have to be disciplined enough to make sure that a regular recharge was high on your list of priorities between gigs, possibly even topping up between sets.

Apart from that, though, the PanaMag's price compares favourably to other retrofitted soundhole pickups – but here, of course, you're gaining a lot more for your money.

The decision to go wireless for an acoustic player is not quite so clear cut as it might be if you were an electric player in a rock band. But the ability to become a wandering minstrel in the truest sense and move freely around the stage – and maybe even into the audience – without fear of entwining yourself in guitar cable is a very tempting option to have!

David Mead

SHADOW PANAMAG WIRELESS SYSTEM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Shadow
Model: PanaMag Wireless System
Retail Price: £349
Made In: China
Features: Stereo pickup with panorama control for stereo/mono operation, separate EQ for treble and bass strings, master volume, phase control, chromatic tuner, 30m range, rechargeable LI-ION battery, digital S/PDIF output (optional), fits most acoustic guitar soundholes.

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: No more cables and fuss-free fitting
Cons: Relatively short battery life and unit hiss
Overall: Great news for all acoustic players who want to cut loose!

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality ★★★★☆
Value for Money ★★★★☆

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Barnes and Mullins
www.bandm.co.uk

APP EXTRA
PRESS PLAY TO
HEAR THIS IN ACTION

AVALON D300A

Avalon revisit the glorious past with a slope-shouldered dread from their Americana line… **David Mead** practises his bluegrass licks

This acoustic from Avalon's "Americana" range is a fine illustration of the diversity to be found in the Northern Ireland-based company's catalogue. I can remember being charmed by the Celtic Ard Ri model that I looked at a while ago, but this guitar is acres away in terms of both design and style. A tribute to the yesteryear greats with an eye on Gibson's celebrated J Series, this instrument exudes real class from the moment you open the case.

BUILD QUALITY

The D300A sits among Avalon's other Americana models that include the jumbo XL340A – as well as the slotted headstock, 12 frets to the body S320A. The model I have with me now is standard spec, but Avalon is willing to incorporate any little tweaks or customisations that a customer requires, within reason of course. So it's worth bearing in mind that there is an opportunity to introduce a little variety into your very own custom version of this Avalon guitar while we whisk through the construction details as they stand.

As I have already said, the design of D300A has Gibson's J-45 at its heart – a slope-shouldered dreadnought with a sunburst finish reminiscent of the illustrious 1940s. It certainly has a lot of vintage charm about it, that's for sure.

It's Sitka spruce for the D300A's top and our review sample has an attractive, relatively wide grain to it. So much so, in fact, that I had to check with the company that this wasn't Adirondack I was looking at. As you can probably see from the accompanying photographs, the sunburst finish has been applied with meticulous care and the abalone rosette provides a subtle glowing contrast to the dark brown finish towards the upper bout.

There are sycamore bindings around the top and back of the body and the back and sides are mahogany. From what I can see in the lighter patches of sunburst, the mahogany here has a lovely stripy pattern to it and the centre strip free back has been expertly bookmatched.

I'm anticipating a bright response from this guitar as befits a mahogany/spruce combo, but I admit that I had to dive into the murky depths of the internet to reassure myself that the Gibson J-45 had rosewood back and sides. Indeed it did – even on Gibson's own contemporary reissues – and obviously Avalon has a good reason as to why they've changed the spec and we'll see if this particular wood combo manages to evoke the past when I get around to the playing test in a moment or two.

The D300A's neck is mahogany, too, and if you look closely, it's possible to see that it's three ply with a 5mm strip running against the grain down the centre. The ebony fronted headstock bears six chrome-coloured Gotoh tuners – reminiscent of Grovers – with the distinctive Avalon logo in pearl on the top.

A 45mm bone nut sits above the guitar's ebony fingerboard with abalone snowflake position markers and some fairly chunky Gibson-style frets. The neck feels wide but not too thick in the hand, but it's worth remembering that this is the sort of detail that is open to reinterpretation should you wish to put in a custom order to Avalon based on this model. A very dark ebony bridge with a bone saddle acts as a terminus for the strings' journey down the fingerboard and some ebony pins make sure everything stays firmly in place.

SOUND QUALITY

In Avalon's spec for this model, they say that I can expect a

The Avalon's sunburst finish is glorious

AVALON D300A

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Avalon
Model: D300A
Retail Price: £3,750
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: Northern Ireland
Top: Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Mahogany
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Gotoh
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Strings Fitted: Phosphor bronze .012 - .052
Left Handers: Yes - no extra cost
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hiscox case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Great-looking classic design with some serious tonal attributes
Cons: There's really nothing to complain about here
Overall: A slope-shouldered dreadnought with fabulous build quality and a seriously great, flexible sound

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★½
Sound Quality	★★★★★
Value for Money	★★★★½

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Avalon Guitars
www.avalonguitars.com

The D300A has the Gibson J45 at its heart – reminicsent of the 1940s

The neck does feel a little wide with some Gibson-style chunky frets, too

"well balanced sound that's perfect for flat-picking and strumming" from the D300A and so it's only fair that my initial assault is via a plectrum and some fulsome open chords. The result is bright, loud and very sweet – the sort of tone that I would imagine would suit bluegrass, old timey and other early 20th century American music styles well. There appears to be a slight natural compression to the sound as well, which could be down to the youth of the spruce top showing through. But if what I'm hearing now is going to mellow a little and open up over the coming years then I would think that you'll have a great deal of tonal firepower under your fingers in no time at all.

It might not have the sort of darkness to the sound that you would perhaps want from Mississippi Delta blues, but that could be the mahogany back and sides coming into play. Rosewood has a reputation for offering up a greater depth and fatter bottom end on occasion, after all. But don't forget that if you're a blueser who's in love with the looks and style of this guitar, rosewood is on Avalon's options list and so all is not lost!

Individual notes fare well on the D300A, too, with a great deal of separation and projection. Fuse both chords and the odd run here and there and you've a perfect formula for country guitar. It's just got the sort of tone that immediately conjures up some sweet acoustic country playing to these ears, at least.

Naturally I had to try a little fingerstyle while I had the guitar out of its case and it has to be said that although a dreadnought body shape isn't probably ever going to be the first choice for that style, the Avalon did really rather well in this department, too. The superb clarity made everything sing nicely, although personally, I'd still go for rosewood on the back and sides as I've been known to be drawn to the dark side...

The result is bright, loud, and very sweet – a tone that would suit bluegrass

CONCLUSION

After having my socks well and truly blown off by the Ard Ri, anticipation was great for this guitar and I wasn't disappointed in the least. Avalon has taken a glance at the past, stylistically speaking, while adding a few subtle contemporary twists of their own along the way. Bags of vintage chic with a very powerful set of tones, I believe that the D300A would settle in well with a variety of styles. Add the pickup of your choice and you would have another ace in your hand because the type of serious tone on offer here would sit very well within a band. There's certainly enough power and sweet treble to cut through the mix and bags of the right stuff to keep any self-respecting fan of Americana happy for years!

David Mead

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APP EXTRA
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GODIN MULTIAC ACS-SA

A marriage of nylon strung acoustic and guitar synth, the Multiac might be an unholy chimera or a wonderful hybrid. **Sam Wise** finds out which.

Godin Guitars has been around since 1972, and the Multiac series were among the first instruments to pair the hexaphonic pickups needed for guitar synth playing with an instrument built to the highest traditional standards. In the wake of the cheap synthesizer boom of the 80s, quite a few guitars had been made out of plastic, often with electronics, synth modules and even onboard speakers built in. These were typically disappointing in practise, and serious players who were still interested wanted something more. The Multiac series continues to this day, pairing piezo undersaddle pickups with hexaphonic units (one output per string), and here we have a nylon-string model. Nylon strung guitars, of course, predate the steel-string models most of us play, so the pairing with the most current digital technology is a brave one.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

If you ignore the slotted headstock and wide, wide neck, the Multiac looks like a posh 80s Telecaster. The plain black finish disguises, to some extent, the lack of pickups, though the wooden string-through bridge gives the acoustic game away rather. The body is chambered maple, which is to say that this is not actually an acoustic guitar at all – it's a solid body electric with some bits carved out. For context, although pictures of what's under the Multiac's top are hard to find, this is probably considerably less acoustic than, for instance, a Gibson 335. The top is solid cedar, but extensive tapping doesn't reveal any significant body resonance, so the top wood may make little difference. The neck is mahogany, with a wide, thin profile very typical of classical guitars, paired with a broad, flat radius fingerboard with broad string spacing. The fingerboard is made of a substance called "Richlite" – a composite material made from layers of cellulose paper infused with phenolic resin to create a very hard, predictable, repeatable material. This stuff is used for tables in Boeing 747s, skatepark ramps, countertops, and here as an alternative to dwindling ebony and rosewood supplies. The neck is bolted on, Fender-style, and is topped with a simple slotted headstock with unbranded classical style open gear three-on-a-plate tuners.

The bridge looks, at first glance, like a normal acoustic bridge, but a closer glance reveals six individual metal saddles, which are necessary to get the six separate signals required to drive a guitar synth. That cute little dip in the tail hides a standard 1/4" jack and the 13-pin output which connects the beast to Roland or Axon guitar synths. On the top horn is a set of controls in disguise as a built in speaker (something this guitar emphatically does not have, thank goodness); the black controls set into a black top are hard to see, but simple enough to be memorable and useable. The five sliders are: guitar volume, three-band EQ, and synth volume – then there's a two way slider for different mid profiles, and two rubbery buttons for selecting different synth voices remotely.

The guitar has an overall feel of excellent quality, but without any of the luxurious appointments you might expect for just over £1,000. The only real nod to luxury is the golden wood top binding (Godin don't give much away about their instruments, including what this wood is), but otherwise, the Multiac feels like a high quality tool rather than a luxury toy for rich kids. It's none the worse for that, either; one of Godin's stated aims with their semi solid "acoustic" models is to make reliable tools which deliver on stage in a way that acoustic guitars don't always. This is a pro tool, and it feels like it.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

It needs to be stated right off the bat that this guitar's neck is modelled on a classical acoustic. If you're looking for a nylon strung guitar that feels welcoming to steel-string players, this

GODIN MULTIAC ACS-SA

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Godin
Model: Multiac ACS-SA
Retail Price: £1,299
Body Size: Tele-style
Made In: Canada
Body wood: Chambered silver leaf maple
Top wood: Cedar
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Richlite
Frets: 22
Tuners: Unbranded slot-headed
Onboard electronics: RMC Polydrive with 13-pin connector and jack input
Nut Width: 1 7/8"
Scale Length: 25 1/2"
Strings Fitted: High quality nylon
Left Handers: Yes
Gig Bag/Case Included: Padded gig bag

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Great build quality, understated, classy and effective tool.
Cons: Bit of a niche market, and some will want more flash for their cash.
Overall: This is a pro stage tool, and must be taken seriously.

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★☆
Sound Quality	★★★★☆
Value for Money	★★★★☆

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Godin Guitars/440 Distribution
www.godinguitars.com
www.440distribution.com

It is beautifully put together and inspires confidence in your playing

The neck is wide and chunky so it's not too welcoming for electric players

is not it. The neck is broad, the fingerboard is flat, and the string spacing is wide, so it's going to play like the real thing. That's not a bad thing either; there are good reasons – related to lower string tension and therefore wider vibration patterns – why classical guitars are still built this way, so if you want to get that nylon tone, you'd better get used to it. Unusual neck aside, the guitar is welcoming; acoustic players will find it mighty skinny, while electric players will appreciate the slight chamfering where a real Tele has none – it's comfy.

Acoustically, the sound is very quiet, much closer to an electric guitar than even a thinline eletro-acoustic, but whether it's the strings or the body construction, it has a thicker, warmer unplugged tone than the Squier Tele we compared it to (for no better reason than the similar body shape). Plug it in to our standard reference Headway Shire King, and the tone is, while pleasing, not much like a nylon-string acoustic. With the EQ set flat, there's certainly a nylon edge to the attack when you hit the strings but, overall, the tone reminds me of nothing so much as the neck pickup on my old 1962 Fender Jazzmaster. Make no mistake, that's a very pleasing tone; plummy, rich and full, but not really like a high-end classical or flamenco guitar. That said, it's unmistakeably nylon, as though I'd strung my Jazzmaster with nylon somehow, and I'm sure it's not aimed at concert classical players, but at gigging pros, maybe electric players, who want a bit of a taste of nylon in their set. We at *Acoustic* are no experts on synth sounds and, of course, the Multiac doesn't produce any of those itself anyway. Plug it into a Roland guitar synth, however, and you'll find it tracks fast and accurately whether you're playing single note or chord stuff. The blend control makes it easy to get just the combination of guitar and synth you want, and if you've got your patches set up right, the patch change controls will make stage work a doddle.

The three metal saddles on the bridge are necessary to drive the guitar synth

CONCLUSION

If this were a steel-string guitar, it would be hard not to recommend it. The tone is nice and very flexible, the guitar is beautifully put together and inspires confidence, and then there's the synth access aspect. The nylon strings and wide neck don't make it any less of a recommendation, just that the target audience is smaller. If a good nylon string that will perform well onstage and resist feedback is on your shopping list, try this. If you need to trigger a synth as well, accept no substitutes.

Sam Wise

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FRESHMAN 12-STRINGS

A brace of Freshman 12-strings unleash their sonorous enchantment upon reviewer **David Mead**. . .

I've always thought that the 12-string acoustic occupies its own niche in the guitar world in a similar way to the tenor, harp or high-strung instruments. It possesses a unique voice, rich and full, that makes virtually any player adapt his or her style to suit its particular charms. It has its champions, too; any self-respecting acoustic player's record collection would be incomplete without a copy of Leo Kottke's *6- And 12-String Guitar* album, for instance. But don't take my word for it, check out Leo's 'Vaseline Machine Gun' on YouTube and you'll see what I mean. Anyway, back to business: let's take a look at what this pair has to offer.

FRESHMAN FA1AM12

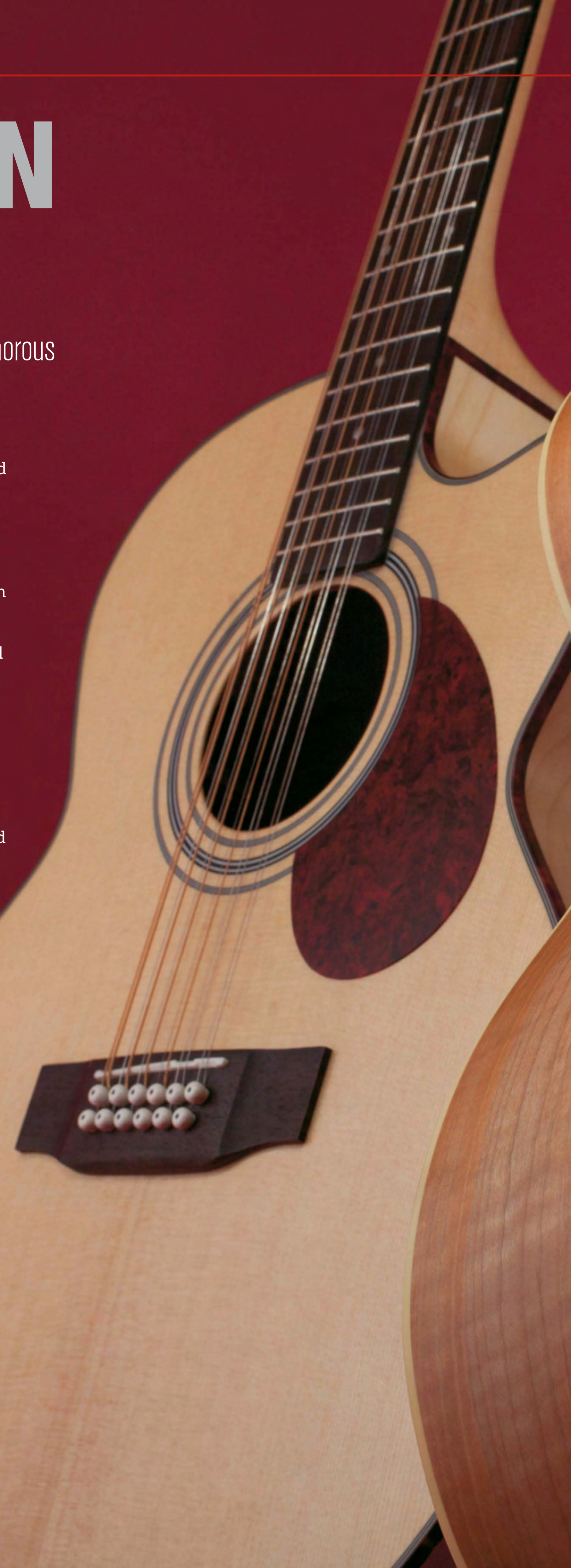
Tuning was my first job and you've doubtless heard all the jokes about the time it takes to tune one 12-string guitar, let alone two. In actual fact, I think that they sound better if they are slightly out of tune, as it produces that distinctive chordal wash – a sort of natural chorus effect – that can really make a rhythm part stand out.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

The FA1 comes in at £300 cheaper than its jumbo-sized stablemate, with Freshman classifying this particular body size as a "folk cutaway". The body looks quite compact, but everything is in proportion and its light-coloured honey hue is attractive to the eye.

Freshman has gone for Canadian Sitka spruce for the FA1's top and everything is this department seems to be in order. It's a nice-looking piece of wood, ably bookmatched and set off with a tortoiseshell trim around both the guitar's body and soundhole, sandwiched between layers of black and white plastic in both cases.

The spec says that the back and sides are quilted maple, but it looks more flamed to my eyes. Nice-looking, though, and I suspect that it's a laminate, as the striping is not mirrored inside the body from what I can see. No problems there; as I've said in the past, I've played some absolutely stunning guitars with laminated backs and sides, some luthiers



APP EXTRA
PRESS PLAY TO HEAR THESE IN ACTION

FISHMAN
batt
tuner
volume
phase
contour

even insisting that they add sturdiness to the body – and who am I to argue?

The FA1's neck is maple, too; it's a three-piece affair with a separate heel and a subtly scarfed headstock and whereas it's broad to accommodate the fretboard width, it's shallow enough to feel good in the hands.

There's a whole slew of sealed back, gold-coloured tuners on the elongated headstock, the front face of which is covered by a rosewood veneer bearing the Freshman logo at the top, matching both the fretboard and bridge.

One of the features of a 12-string is some additional width to the fingerboard, the FA1 measuring in at 48mm at the nut. I've found in the past that an accurately cut nut and sympathetic string spacing are both crucial to a 12-string guitar's playability and I'm glad to report that both features here are absolutely spot on.

Returning to the body end, we find 12 cream-coloured plastic string pegs and a compensated bone saddle. All in all, the workmanship is top notch; my only small complaint would be a slight roughness to the fret edges along the neck.

FRESHMAN FA1AM12

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Freshman
Model: FA1AM12
Retail Price: £400
Body Size: Folk Cutaway
Made In: Asia
Top: Canadian Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Quilted maple
Neck: Maple
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Die-cast gold coloured
Nut Width: 48mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Isys 201
Left Handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A compact and affordable 12-string with a seductively warm tonal response
Cons: Just those fret ends
Overall: A nice surprise to find such good sounds in a 12-string at this end of the price range

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality ★★★★½
Sound Quality ★★★★★
Value for Money ★★★★★

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Freshman Guitars
www.freshmanguitars.net

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

One of the inevitable aspects of any 12-string is a tendency towards top-heaviness due to additional length of the headstock. It's not so pronounced here – in fact the FA1 is a comfortable guitar to sit and play – but you might need to wear a strap to ensure no untoward listing to starboard during a performance. Freshman has provided an additional strap peg on the guitar's heel with this in mind and so everything here remains satisfyingly ship-shape.

The FA1's tone is exceptional. It's incredibly warm and rich – surprising, in view of the body size. Even when I drop tuned the entire guitar to D the warmth remained, with no shortage of nicely proportioned bass response as an additional bonus. Another surprise is that it's relatively easy both to fingerpick and use a plectrum to bring out individual note patterns within chords. It might sound like an obvious attribute for any self-respecting 12-string, but I've found it to be quite rare to find an all-rounder in this respect.

There's a Fishman Isys pickup (with a built-in tuner for those tempestuous 12-string tuning moments) pre-installed on the FA1 and this really sees the guitar come to life. All the warmth remains and even with the EQ controls on both guitar and amplifier set perfectly flat, there's a tonal response that would delight anyone. I would imagine that a little bit of fine-tuning would bring about even more depth and flexibility, tonally speaking, too.

The Freshman FA1's tone is exceptional – it is incredibly warm and rich

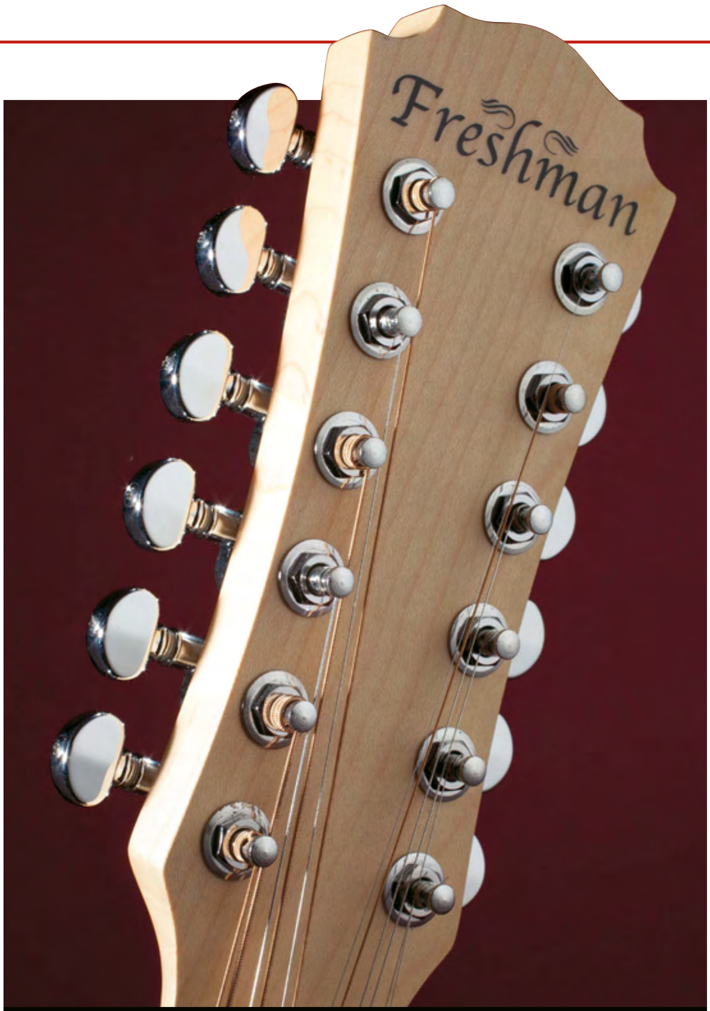
FRESHMAN AP3JEM12

The second Freshman 12 is a jumbo and promises several upgrades in terms of hardware in accordance with its higher price tag.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

This guitar is part of Freshman's "Apollo" range, which offers a greater bang-for-buck ratio with premium grade woods and state of the art electronics. As a jumbo, it's significantly bigger than its folk-sized counterpart, which should lend a little more depth to the sound. We'll see later on. For now, we'll take a look at the bare essentials where construction is concerned.

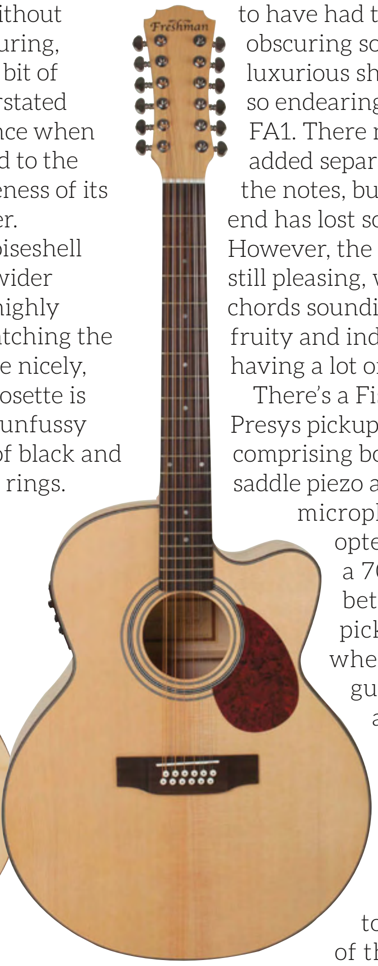
The top wood here is AA-grade Sitka spruce and it's possible to see straight away that the grain pattern is more



The AP3 is darker in tone than its companion, with some added authority

complex than on the FA1. This may or may not be significant as it's never really an indicator of quality. I've seen some incredibly ordinary looking Adirondack spruce tops on high-end instruments. However, here we have a tight, close grain pattern with a good amount of "feathering" present, too.

What comes as a bit of a surprise is that the maple back and sides on the AP3 are so plain when compared to the FA1's attractive tiger stripe equivalent. I suspected that this might be due to the fact that the back and sides here would be solid, but a quick inspection of the wood surrounding the battery compartment confirms that it is, once again, a laminate. It's certainly not totally without some figuring, but it's a bit of an understated appearance when compared to the attractiveness of its little brother.



The tortoiseshell binding is wider and more highly figured, matching the scratchplate nicely, while the rosette is a neat and unfussy collection of black and white rings.

It's maple for the AP3's neck, although this time it's a three-ply piece of wood with a centre strip of slightly darker wood and I'm guessing that the grain has been reversed for added stability and strength. To be honest, it's hard to be sure, but it would figure that this might be the case.

This time around, the tuners are Grover, but I must admit that one or two of them felt slightly stiff whilst I was tuning the guitar. This is probably down to the newness of the instrument and they should loosen up with time. Apart from that, the spec is along similar lines as before: rosewood fingerboard – no sharp fret ends – rosewood bridge, compensated bone saddle and cream-coloured string pegs.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

So does the AP3's jumbo body size add up to a bigger sound? To be honest, it's a strange one because whereas there's definitely a "hump" in the instrument's lower mids and bass response, it seems to have had the effect of obscuring some of the luxurious shimmer I found so endearing with the FA1. There might be some added separation between the notes, but the higher end has lost some sparkle. However, the overall effect is still pleasing, with strummed chords sounding full and fruity and individual notes having a lot of authority.

There's a Fishman Presys pickup on the AP3, comprising both an under saddle piezo and a fixed microphone inside. I opted for around a 70:30 blend between the pickup and mic when testing the guitar through an amp and the result was pleasing. With the use of on-board EQ it's possible to restore some of the top end to its slinky magnificence and go pretty much anywhere else you might choose on the sonic spectrum.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the AP3 is darker in tone than its companion but there's possibly some added authority to both its acoustic and amplified voice. It sounds "sturdier". I guess if I was asked to choose between the two I would go for the FA1 because of its pert body size and remarkably beautiful sound. But, you understand, that's just a subjective opinion and I would urge anyone who is currently on the hunt for a 12-string to try both models as each has its individual charm.

David Mead

FRESHMAN
AP3JEM12

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Freshman
Model: AP3JEM12
Retail Price: £700
Body Size: Jumbo Cutaway
Made In: Asia
Top: AA Grade Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Maple
Neck: Maple
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Grover
Nut Width: 48mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Presys 301
Left Handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A jumbo 12 with upgraded spec and a seriously nice tone
Cons: A slight lack of high-end shimmer and a stiff tuner or two
Overall: A 12-string that's easy on the fingers as well as the wallet – great for strumming and fingerstyle

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★☆
Value for Money	★★★★½

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

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www.freshmanguitars.net

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NEW RELEASES

As supporters of new music, Freshman Guitars has recently launched an interactive website which contains exclusive video footage of interviews and performances with Freshman endorsees.

Check it out: www.freshmanguitars.co.uk

ARTIST	TITLE	LABEL	GENRE
Gérard Abiton	Ponce – Complete Guitar Music	Brilliant Classics	Classical
Sam Amidon	Lily-O	Nonesuch	Indie Folk
Aurelio	Lándini	Real World	World
Manuel Barrueco / The Beijing Guitar Duo	China West	Tonar	Classical
Naomi Bedford	A History Of Insolence	Dusty Willow	Alt Folk
Blue Rose Code	The Ballads Of Peckham Rye	Ronachan Songs	Folk
Pieta Brown	Paradise Outlaw	Red House	Bluegrass
Chico And The Gypsies	Fiesta	Alegria	World
Adam Cohen	We Go Home	Cooking Vinyl	Folk
Sharon Corr	The Same Sun	Absolute Marketing	Pop
Jennifer Crook	Carnforth Station	Transatlantic Roots	Folk
Luke Daniels	What's Here What's Gone	Gael Music	Folk
Dervish	A Celebration!! 1989-2014	Whirling Discs	Irish
Donovan	1965	Sanctuary	Folk
Bob Dylan	Folk Singer Humdinger Vol.2: The Original Recordings 1961-1962	Smith & Co	Folk
Steve Earle & The Dukes	Down At The Club: Cotton Club, Atlanta GA 1988	Smokin	Country
The Earls Of Leicester	The Earls Of Leicester	Decca	Bluegrass
Ramblin' Jack Elliott	The Hightone Years	Rockbeat	Folk
Flatt & Scruggs	Seven Classic Albums Plus Bonus Singles	Real Gone Music	Bluegrass
The Fureys	The Times They Are A Changing	Court	Irish
David Gibb	Letters Through Your Door	Hairpin	Folk Pop
Goldblade	Acoustic Jukebox	Overground	Punk
Steve Gunn	Way Out Weather	Paradise	Folk Punk
Tilman Hoppstock	Johann Sebastian Bach – Works For Guitar	Christophorus	Classical
Ashley Hutchings	The Riot Of Spring And Other Historical Dramas, Large And Small	Talking Elephant	Folk
The Incredible String Band	U	BGO	Psych Folk
Vance Joy	Dream Your Life Away	Atlantic	Folk Pop
The Levellers	Greatest Hits	On The Fiddle	Folk Punk
Ewan McLennan	Stories Still Untold	Fellside	Scottish
Reg Meuross	England Green & England Grey	Hatsongs	Folk
The Old Dance School	Steer In The Night: Live	Transition	Folk
Karin Schaupp	Mosaic: Australian Guitar Concertos	ABC Classics	Classical
Scottdale String Band	Old Folks Better Go To Bed	Arhoolie	Old Time
Anna Shannon	A Celebration Of Old England	Wild Goose	Trad Folk
Kathryn Tickell & The Side	Kathryn Tickell & The Side	Resilient	Folk
Martha Tilston	The Sea	Squiggly	Folk
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Alexander Wolfe	From The Shallows	Mita	Folk Pop
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Various Artists	Link Of Chain: A Songwriters' Tribute To Chris Smither	Signature Sounds	Country

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"Not coming from a pickup making background was an advantage for me. Doubtless having a background in instrument making as well was a big advantage, knowing what players would want."

"I've got a lot of high profile users for the Mimesis now – one or two people that I can't really mention, you know? Just one of those things, so keep your eyes peeled! Ben Howard, Thomas Leeb, Chris Woods are all using it, though."

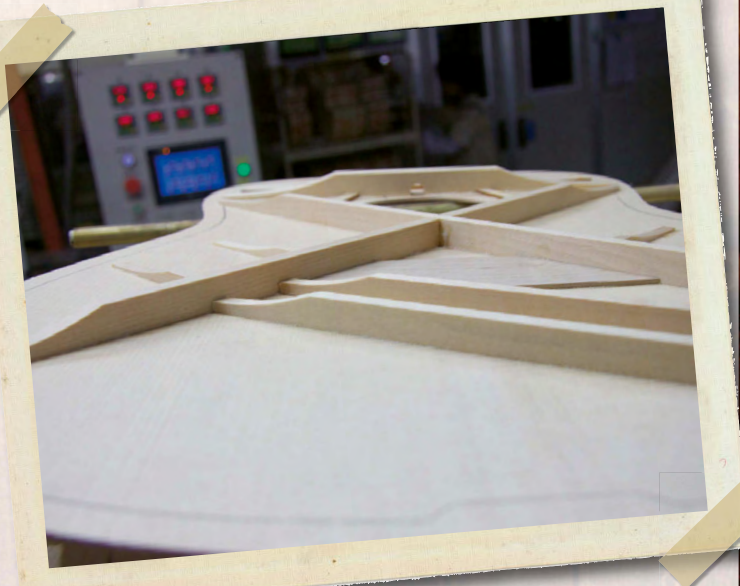
'I live and work in Scotland now, but I am originally from Manchester – and I was, at one point, based in the south of England. My wife is a teacher and she was working down there and so it was actually when I moved to Dunstable that I started making and I've been doing that since about 1979. I got sidetracked, in a way, on to mandolins when I was really aiming for violins, to be honest. They were specifically Gibson-style mandolins and so for a long time all I built was F5s, very closely based on Gibson's design, the Florentine one, and I used to do quite well with all the bluegrass players. My background is mechanical engineering; I was a draftsman and mechanical design engineer and I started off in mining in my early days. So I've a background, basically, in building things. A lot of, shall we say, slightly older makers seem to have a background in engineering.'

'Guitar building could be seen as engineering to an extent... Even as a kid I made things. I was a real model aeroplane freak, for instance. Then the Beatles came along and it sparked my interest in guitars but I was never much of a player and so it seemed that my best option was to go into making them.'

'I tend to have a range of instruments and then people kind of pick and mix – take some of the features or if they've got their own ideas then they're quite welcome to discuss them with me and see what we can come up with. So there's some reasonable flexibility, but it's almost invariably archtops. People plug them in, but there's a sway toward players using them as an acoustic instrument these days; people are going back to that and appreciating it for what it is. For instance, I started using not only magnetic pickups, which is the usual method for an archtop, but using microphones as well to amplify them. That's what Martin Taylor does; he's got the magnetic going into the PA or whatever then, when he's performing live, he's usually got a microphone at the front just picking up some of the air and the general ambience of the guitar to mix in with the magnetic.'

'As well as building guitars, I also invented the Rare Earth – originally called the Mimesis – pickup system for acoustics. To be honest, the person who got me into thinking about pickups was Dave Pegg of Fairport Convention. I made him a couple of instruments when he was playing with Jethro Tull; I made him a mandola and he said that he needed to amplify it because he wanted to use it on the next tour. I wasn't that impressed with what he was currently using to amplify it and so I started thinking about things and came up with a little magnetic pickup for the mandolin and it kind of all started from there, really.'

'I then came up with the idea for the gooseneck microphone inside the guitar. Looking around, I found that a lot of people had been doing that, like Ry



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"As well as building guitars, I also invented the Rare Earth – originally called the Mimesis – pickup system for acoustics. The person who got me into thinking about pickups was Dave Pegg of Fairport Convention."

Cooder and a lot of other well known players, but they would have had to put up with multiple cables coming out of their instruments, or a mic on a stand in front of them and not being able to move about. So really it was just taking what was out there and finding a mic that worked. It all came together quite nicely, really, because just at that time surface mount technology was becoming more widely available and so everything could get a lot smaller. Plus, the neodymium magnets were very small and very powerful and so I was able to put everything together into a very small and compact package. That was the thing I started out with, the idea to make the magnetic pickup as small and as unobtrusive as possible. It was certainly the first one, I think, on the market which used the neodymium magnets with two integrated preamps and the microphone built in there, plus the batteries underneath. So all you had to do was to lift the whole thing out and just change the batteries on the pickup itself. So there was a lot of new thinking there – probably because I didn't know what I was doing!'

'Not coming from a pickup making background was an advantage for me. Doubtless having a background in instrument making as well was a big advantage, knowing what players would want. Then Fishman took over production. I couldn't keep up with the demand and so it just made sense at that particular time that Fishman came along and they're a great company and so we worked out a deal and we still continue to collaborate – even now.'

'I've got a lot of high profile users for the Mimesis now – one or two people that I can't really mention, you know? Just one of those things, so keep your eyes peeled! But Thomas Leeb is using it, Chris Woods, Chris Newman, John Goldie... I was quite pleased with John, actually, because I know him quite well and it really seems to suit him, his sound is great these days and it's not just me saying that, it's a lot of other people – and John's very pleased with it. In fact he did a couple of recordings for me which are up on the website and there was a great video of him that the BBC did at Celtic Connections with him playing live and I have to say that even I was impressed with the sound!'

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David Mead

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12 STRING CORNER

'Heart Of Grace' and open G tuning

I only took one 12-string to the London Acoustic Guitar Show in September – but it was a rare one! In some ways, the Clifford branded 12-string is akin to an Oscar Schmidt 12-string – although you've probably seen fewer. There isn't a great deal of information out there with which to draw comparison, but I can offer the following...

Clifford guitars were the property of a music publisher by the name of J. W. Jenkins & Sons who were based in Kansas, USA – but they were probably made by either Harmony or Regal in Chicago. They also owned the Harwood Guitars brand – and these are also hard to source nowadays. I have seen the odd Clifford six-string but never a 12-string. Many of you may wonder why I go after these brands as opposed to Martins and such. It's simple really, there are many of those guitars available – and many at very expensive prices – yet their 12-strings, at the time, were nowhere near the excellence of their six-strings.

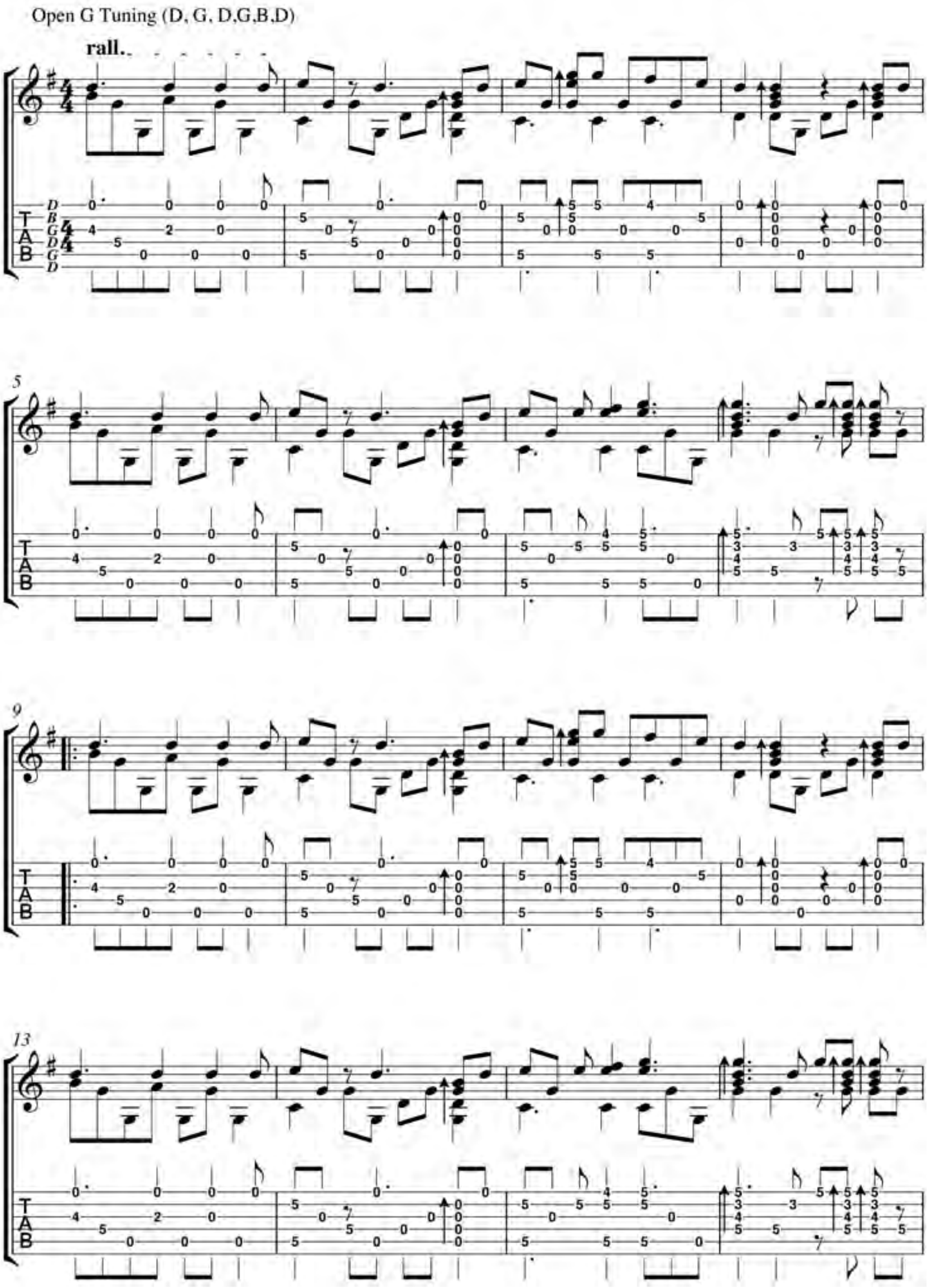
The most popular 12-strings in the 60s and 70s came from Guild. The F212s were, and are, the classic 12-string.

There is, of course, a vast difference between vintage and new 12-strings and so comparison between the two is near impossible. Early 12-strings were usually ladder braced and made of non exotic tonewoods – like birch, which many Stellas were made of. They also didn't have layers of varnish added to the finish and the woods used were generally thinner than those of today.

I've been featuring 12-string solo tunes and I try to keep them as interesting and constructive as possible. This month's selection is a mid-tempo, melodic piece entitled 'Heart Of Grace', that winds it's way through a melodious tapestry and lets the player drift through bass line riffs in open G tuning. Download the digital edition to hear the tune, and download the full tablature from the Acoustic magazine website.

Paul Brett

'HEART OF GRACE' BY PAUL BRETT



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GUITARS

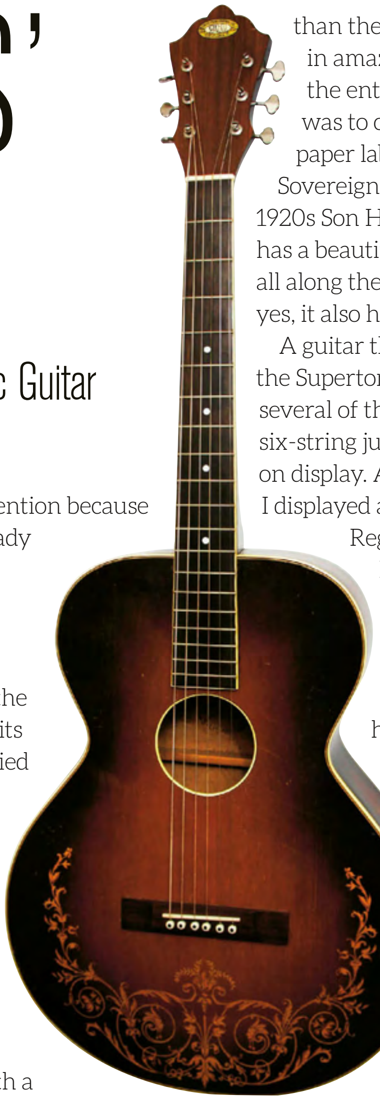
COLLECTORS' COLUMN

Vintage instrument round-up from the London Acoustic Guitar Show – including a rare 1938 Oahu jumbo

There was a lot of interest in my selection of vintage instruments I displayed at the London Acoustic Guitar Show this year. As usual, I took along a varied host of vintage stringed items that attracted a wide variety of age groups and hopefully it illustrated to some of the younger visitors that guitars were made before 2014!

Some of the instruments I took with me included one of the first six-string guitars made, which was converted from an eight-course Renaissance instrument to a six-string in around 1750 – and which is of French origin. It really is of a totally different era of instrument: attractively slim in body design and as light as a feather with peg head tuners. It actually plays remarkably well if you can get the pegs to stop slipping. Next up was a 1900s mandola that attracted much attention because of the beautiful gypsy lady pictured on the back. It is attributed to the Neapolitan College of Music with a patent applied for number on the paper label inside. It emits a bright sound, full-bodied tone and with a little more bass response than a normal mandolin.

Any Oscar Schmidt-made guitar goes down well with blues players and I took along a 1908 Schmidt Sovereign six-string with a mustache bridge. This is earlier



than the main blues period, but it is in amazing condition and does give the enthusiast an insight into what was to come. It even has its original paper label inside. Another Schmidt Sovereign guitar I took along was the late 1920s Son House "Tree of Life" model. It has a beautiful inlaid tree of life embedded all along the neck, plays like butter and, yes, it also has the original paper label, too.

A guitar that you rarely see these days is the Supertone brand from the 30s. I have several of these and I displayed a parlour six-string just to enhance the selection on display. Also, staying with the 1930s, I displayed a Dobro mandolin and a rare Regal-made 10-string Tiple. The Dobro's metallic resonator has a moon and stars pattern stamped into the cover. The Regal Tiple attracted a lot of interest as many visitors hadn't seen one before – it has a great sound and the most beautiful purfling set around the edges. It also has its original cardboard/canvas case that many visitors found amusing.

My Oahu jumbo, made in 1938 with all the gold transfers intact, was also the subject of much comment and admiration. As the show this year was expanded over two floors to include an electric exhibition, I slipped in a rare 1956 Magnatone that was designed by Paul Bigsby. I really love this little one-pickup guitar. I can get Telecaster, Les Paul, and Stratocaster sounds out of this – plus many more with the right amp. It also has its original white case, and from a collector's point of view it's important to get the whole package. Cases are often the first casualty in a guitar's life and it's rare to find original ones. Original cases can fetch some healthy prices if found in good condition.

One thing I was impressed with at the show was the new tube amp that German guitarist Thomas Blug had on offer. It's something for those of you who want to decrease the size of your amplifier while keeping the power going. It will be distributed by JHS in the coming months – and I've put my name down for one.

Until the next issue, the world goes on – for collectors, the search is still on for that elusive item at the right price to fill a gap in their collection of vintage instruments.

Paul Brett

Paul Brett with his 1930s Gibson Mastertone Special six-string. Above – the 1938 Oahu jumbo, both of which he exhibited at LAGS

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IN THE LOOP

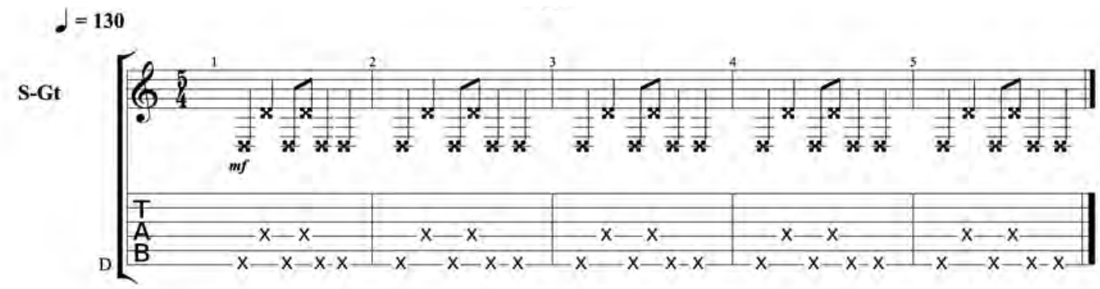
USING ALTERNATE TUNINGS AS A CREATIVE TOOL

In recent issues of this column I've given you as many techniques as possible to make loops interesting. You can layer additional parts to give the listener the illusion of change. You can play additional chord substitutions over your initial sequence, create fake synth sounds using a volume pedal, play percussion on the body of the guitar or layer multiple additional guitar parts. It's only dull playing looped material live if you make it dull! It's down to you to embrace the limitations and create something memorable. Think about the way you present your complete set, keep songs in the same key apart from each other and try to mix up fast and slow songs. Think about what makes the best live shows and performers so memorable.

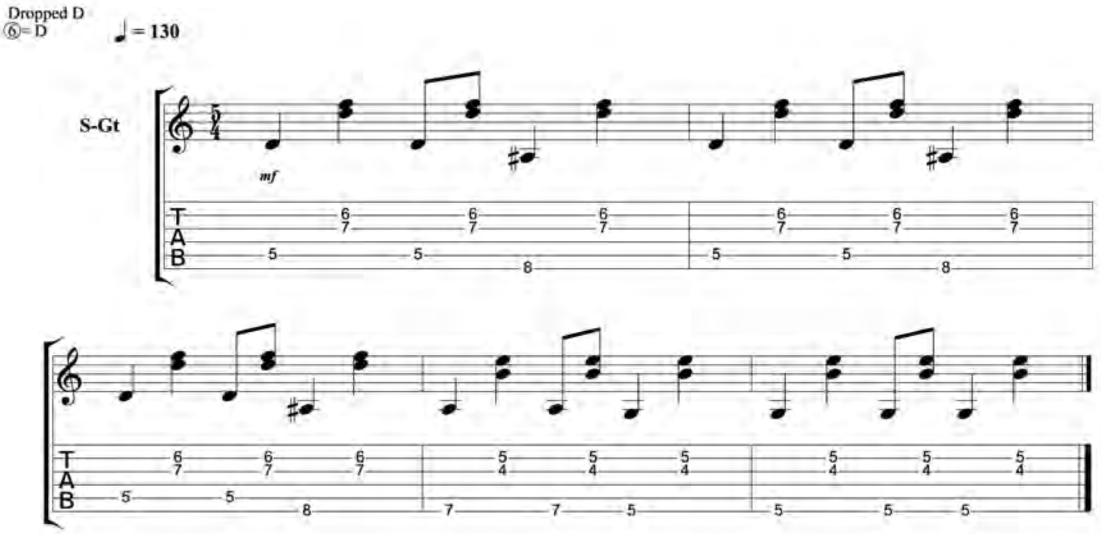
One idea we can look at is using alternative tunings. Anything that extends the range of notes you can play on the acoustic guitar is of use when using a loop pedal.

When looping, we're often looking to fill out a lot of space in the music, to compensate for not having a full band. Dropping your low E string down to D, C# or even B can help to give some additional "oomph" to the proceedings. If you're going to be using alternative or dropped tunings a lot, you can use heavier gauge strings to keep the string tension bearable.

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



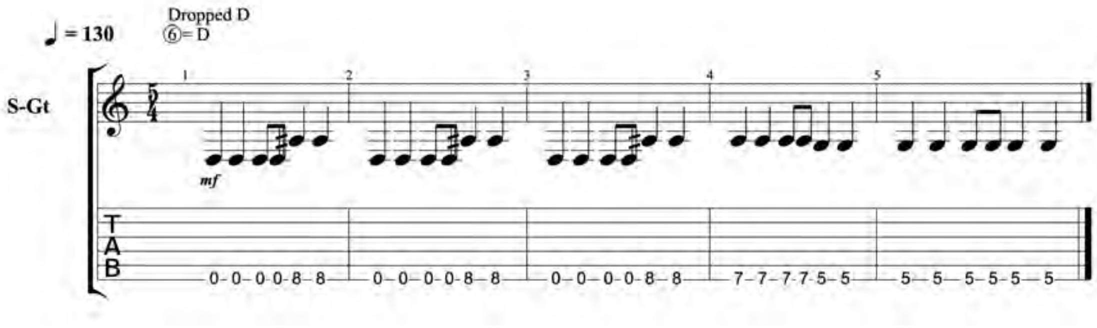
Drop D tuning is probably the most popular alternative tuning; you simply tune the low E string down a whole step. Alternate tunings aren't just for fingerstylists, Neil Young (think 'Harvest Moon'), the Allman Brothers Band (think 'Midnight Rider'), among others, use drop D tuning widely.

In this month's examples we'll look at building a loop in this tuning. Before we start we'll lay down a simple rhythm in 5/4 time by hitting the body of the guitar. A guitar is just a big drum with strings across it and hitting an electro-acoustic is a useful way to build up beats. Experiment with hitting the guitar in different places to get different sounds. An octave pedal can be useful here – when plugged into your electro acoustic, you can get much deeper bass notes.

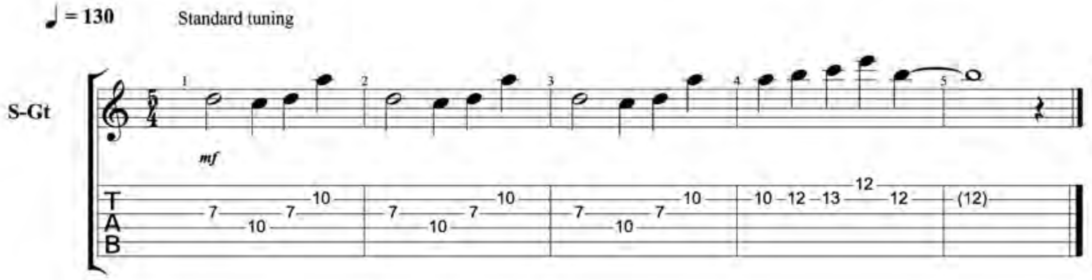
Hit the loop record button on your looper pedal and play the rhythm shown in **example 1** by hitting the body of the guitar, it's in 5/4 but it feels fairly natural. If you think of 'Take Five' by Dave Brubeck, '15 Step' by Radiohead or Sting's 'Seven Days' those songs feel quite straight forward but are in the time signature of 5/4. Play the rhythm on your own before recording it; once you have the feel it's easy to record. Try to internalise the rhythm, so you don't have to count it. You don't actually have to play this rhythm part on your guitar, if you have a mic connected to your loop pedal you could use any percussion instrument or even a random object to play the part on. I've seen the acoustic guitarist Jon Hart do this by beat boxing, which he records into his loop pedal. Be creative and take risks.

Once this is looping round, we can start to build things up. First we'll record some chords in the key of Dm as shown in **example 2**. Hit record/overdub and play these chords over the loop you have built up in **example 1**. The chord sequence

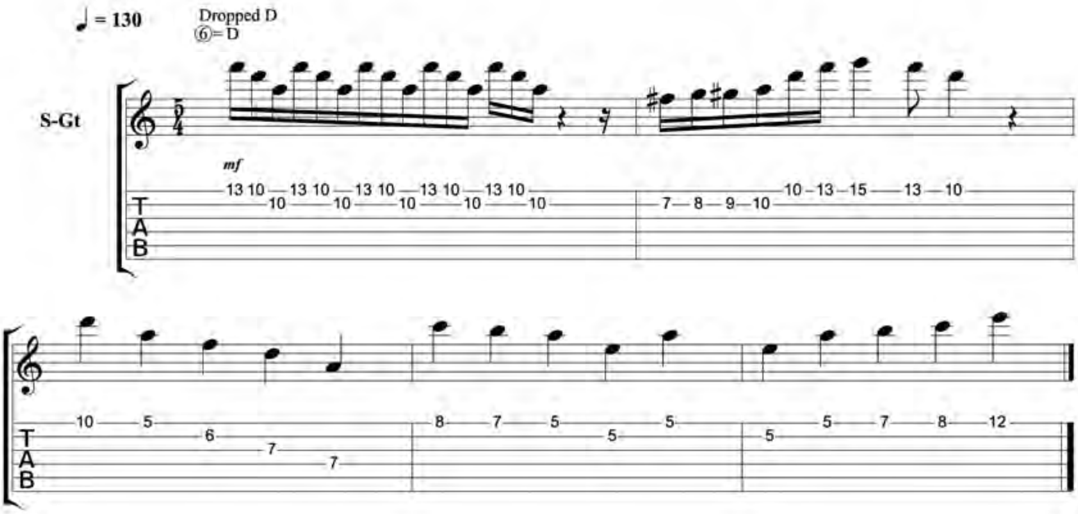
EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



is based on Dm, A#, A (Sus2) and Em/G. Notice it loops around after five bars rather than four. If you are going to use loops for a few minutes of a live performance, you need to keep them interesting or you risk loosing your audience.

Example 3 is a bass line that goes underneath the chords shown in **example 2** – this makes the best of the drop D tuning. If you have an octave pedal, switch it on at this point to make the bass line even lower. Hit overdub again and record in **example 3**.

Example 4 is a melody that you can play over our loop that we have recorded in **examples 1** to **3**. Let the notes ring as much as possible. Notice you can get away with a fairly simple melody if you make the chord sequence and rhythm interesting and surprising.

Example 5 demonstrates a few ideas for soloing over the sequence built up in our loop from **examples 1** to **3**. The first three bars are based on D minor triads plus some additional chromatic notes. The last two bars are based on A minor and C major triads that work well over the last two chords.

Another good thing about alternative tunings is that your clichés won't work – your safe lead solo runs won't be the same notes, in the same position. Drop D is probably the easiest tuning, but try a few different ones like open E, or drop B. You could evening try making your own tuning up – Jon Gomm treats the guitar "like an open canvas for interpretation." Ben Howard uses an amalgamation for a lot of his compositions, too. Listen to 'The Wolves', 'Old Pine' and 'Only Love' from *Every Kingdom* – he's fond of using CGCGGC.

Jimmy Page composed a lot of music in different tunings – one of his best known songs 'Kashmir' is in DADGAD. Try tuning your guitar until it sounds interesting to you – what's to stop you? King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp decided to use his own "new standard" tuning of CGDAEG in the 80s as he thought that using a new tuning forced the musician to rethink their approach to the instrument, to play with more thought, and more mindfully (there were also advantages in terms of a wider range of available notes).

However you decide to tune your guitar, the important thing is that you find tunings that suit you, that inspire you, and that open new doors, creatively. Whether you use them to compose symphonies or just to extend the range of the guitar to play a bass line, they are a useful creative tool and another idea to keep the attention of an audience when live looping.

Matt Stevens

MATT STEVENS

Instrumental Composer

Matt Stevens is a musician and composer from London. An instrumental artist, he uses an acoustic guitar and sampler to create multi-layered tracks live. His music has been described as "a guitar orchestra". He plays live all over the UK and listens to Sonic Youth, Carcass, Nick Drake, Cardiacs and King Crimson. He is constantly recording new music for several projects.

www.mattstevensguitar.com

NEW MUSIC

ANI DIFRANCO

ALLERGIC TO WATER

www.righteousbabe.com

Recorded at her home in New Orleans, the prolific US singer-songwriter, feminist icon and Pete Seeger acolyte's latest boasts a continued commitment to commodities so often lacking in the overflowing singer-songwriter pool – depth and substance. Fine guitar work throughout interweaves with Jenny Scheinman's jazz-inflected violin and the presence of local legend, Ivan Neville, brings a sure-footed, roots authenticity to a set of grown-up originals; from the ominous, minor-key crunch of opener, 'Dithering', (which does anything but) via the propulsive, Kashmir-like, surge and swell of 'Genie', the finger-clicking, On-Broadway pop-soul of 'Woe Be Gone' (its slinky brass and snapping snare echoing early Rickie Lee Jones), right through to the bluesy, Norah Jones-ish closer, 'Rainy Parade'.

STEVE BENNETT

EMMA STEVENS

WAVES

www.emmastevensmusic.com

Radio 2 has already swooned over the uber-catchy, 'Make My Day' and this second album from the Surrey singer-songwriter expands the impression of an accomplished purveyor of lightweight, inoffensive, acoustic pop in full flow. The cliché-heavy lyrics of 'Stop The World' set the slick tone and there's no denying Stevens is a fine singer possessed of a vulnerable, breathy charm. 'Helium' serves up top-notch, sing-along stuff for the pre-teen crowd, though the bloodless balladry of 'Nothing Serious' feels strained compared to the pure, haunting simplicity of closer, 'Walking'. Meanwhile, after 'Anywhere' and the country-ish 'Amaretto Kisses', (perfectly conveying, albeit unwontedly, the sickly sweetness of the title-tipple) the listener may well be looking for kittens to strangle.

STEVE BENNETT

ELLIOTT BROOD

WORK AND LOVE

www.elliottbrood.ca

This (short at 34 minutes) second album from the Toronto trio picks up from their award-winning debut with another exemplary bout of immaculate singing and playing that, will undoubtedly twitch FM-radio antennae but won't frighten the horses. From folk-pop opener, 'Little Ones' to the snotty, country snarl of 'Nothing Left' with its echoes of Tom Petty and the Black Crowes, this feels like a band aiming for the Jayhawks and hitting the Rembrandts every time. The full-tilt, spaghetti-western punk of 'Mission Bell' gives it the full mariachi-Morricone but it's in the Steve Earle-style rocker 'Better Times' and the relaxed back-porch warmth of the mandolin-led, 'Jigsaw Heart' that this threesome finds its most comfortable setting.

STEVE BENNETT

THE NEW BASEMENT TAPES

LOST ON THE RIVER

www.thenewbasementtapes.com

Overseen in Hollywood by the ubiquitous T-Bone Burnett, this suitably glamorous collective sets out to reinvigorate a cache of newly-discovered Bob Dylan lyrics from 1967; the legendary Big Pink era. Elvis Costello, Rhiannon Giddens, Jim James, Taylor Goldsmith (Dawes) and Marcus Mumford all provide melodies and My Morning Jacket frontman, James, perfectly catches the ramshackle, Bob-plus-Band vibe on opener 'Down On The Bottom', setting the tone for a typically high-class outing which, possibly due to the number of fine singers vying for microphone time, feels more like a sampler for an ultra-hip Americana label than a fully unified project. Stand-out moments include the spot-on Beatles harmonies of 'Nothing To It' and the rollicking, banjo-and-bones romp, 'Duncan and Jimmy'.

STEVE BENNETT

ANAIS MITCHELL

XOA

www.anaismitchell.com

A self-selected "greatest hits" outing of sorts, albeit in the most understated fashion, and possibly her most intimate, accessible recording. Between airing a few fine originals, Mitchell revisits her dark folk-opera, 'Hadestown', the ambitiously-epic Americana of 'Young Man In America' and her earliest recordings with the brilliant Michael Chorney in 'Cosmic American'. With 'Child Ballads' producer, Gary Paczosa, sticking to that same stripped-back formula, we get big themes intimately rendered in a raw, unadorned acoustic setting – Mitchell's voice, often too cutesy for some, ditching any unwanted sweetness in favour of a more urgent, close-mic'd intensity. Highlights include the lilting, upbeat 'Now You Know', the irresistible, faux-innocent, 'Two Kids' and a sassy, string-snapping 'Our Lady of the Underground'.

STEVE BENNETT

ALEXANDER WOLFE

FROM THE SHALLOWS

www.alexanderwolfe.co.uk

This is the third album from a singer-songwriter currently feted on both sides of the Atlantic. It's over-long (at an hour) and the highlights take a while to emerge from the padding ('Two Bottles'). Opener, 'Trick of the Light', feels like a pumped-up, John Martyn pastiche with added arm-waving chorus before things pick up considerably with the gloriously melodic duet (with Gabrielle Aplin), 'Still Life'. Nothing else here matches its majestic sweep, though 'She Saw a Rabbit', 'Into The Deep' and the beautiful, 'Love Is All There Is' (Wolfe unleashing his inner Buckley) come close. Elsewhere, 'Swallow The Dice' has an appealingly louche, brass-fuelled swagger and in the vocal department, Wolfe's a ringer for the great Colin Blunstone on 'Dinosaur Song'.

STEVE BENNETT

EWAN MCLENNAN

STORIES STILL UNTOLD

www.ewanmclennan.co.uk

This third album from the understated star of the last Transatlantic Sessions again mixes traditional fare with his own compositions in a style that's as much heartfelt storytelling as beautifully mesmeric song-craft. There's no mistaking the political slant here in a new melodic setting for Ernest Jones's biting Chartist Hymn, 'Song of the Lower Classes', the miners' lullaby, 'Coorie Doon' or Alister Hulett's moving lament for the great Scots Socialist, John McLean, 'The Granite Cage', throughout all of which, McLennan's deftly-picked Bown acoustic and gently rasping, richly Scots-accented burr manage to both stir and soothe in equal measure. Elsewhere, his own wistful 'Out On The Banks' proves fine company for Burns ballad, 'Aye Waulkin O', and the captivatingly melancholy spell of 'The Shearing'.

STEVE BENNETT

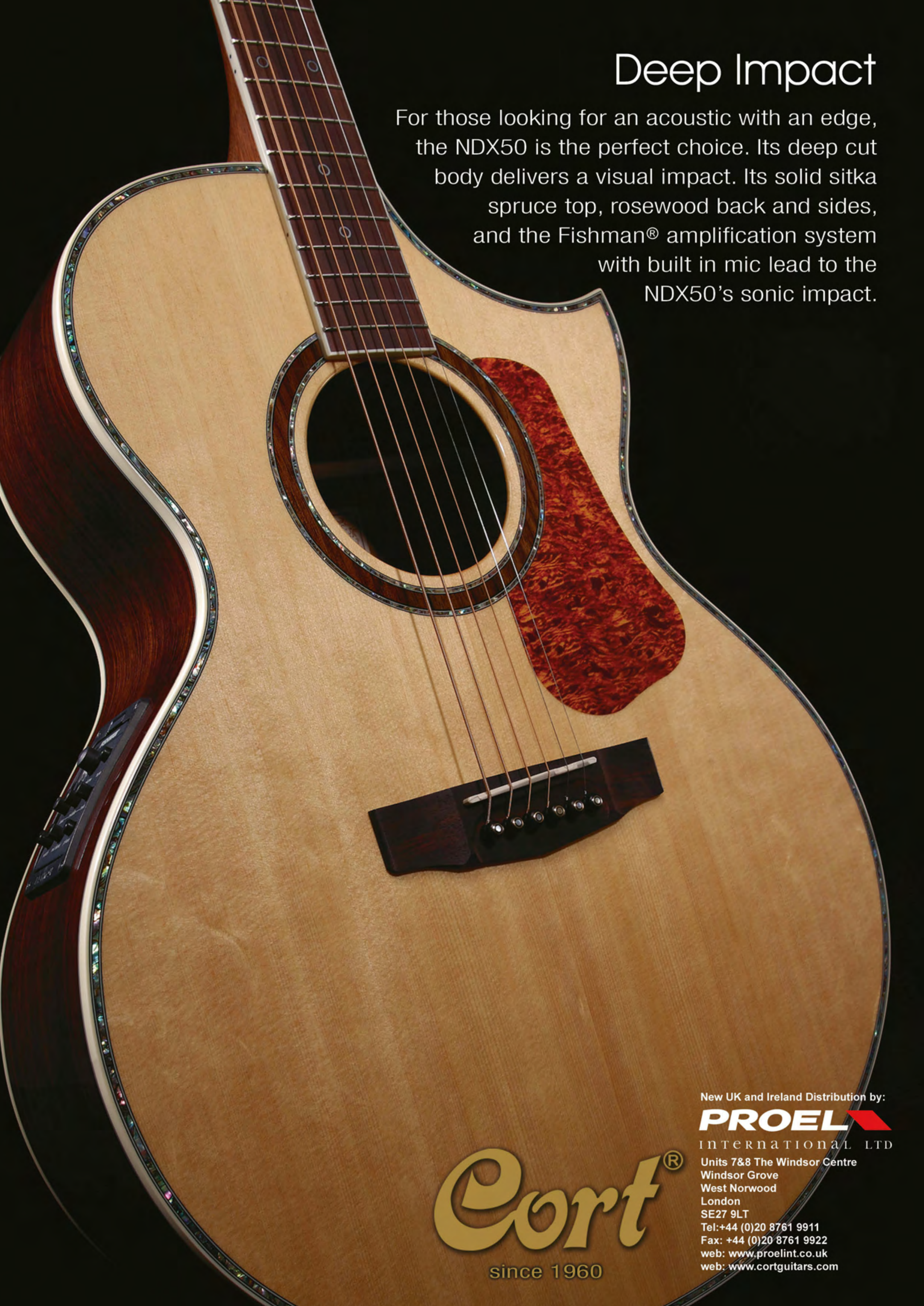
JOSIENNE CLARKE & BEN WALKER

NOTHING CAN BRING BACK THE HOUR

www.josienneclarke.co.uk

The album's cover sees the English folk duo floating like Victorian ghosts, detached from all things modern. A visual metaphor for their sound, perhaps. This second release sees guitarist Walker crafting subtle orchestrations and multi-layered vocals under a mostly sombre mix of traditional songs and Clarke's old-worldly originals. Lovely opener 'Silverline', with its oh-so-English Parry/Butterworth string-stylings belies the melancholy to come – Clarke's pure alto buoyed by Sam Brookes's delicate, quivering harmonies on the standout, 'A Simple Refrain'. And while longueurs melt into moments of great beauty, it's a shame Clarke's exquisitely precise singing is marred by a bizarrely affected accent on the traditional material ("advo-ernce" and "cho-ernce" for advance and chance).

STEVE BENNETT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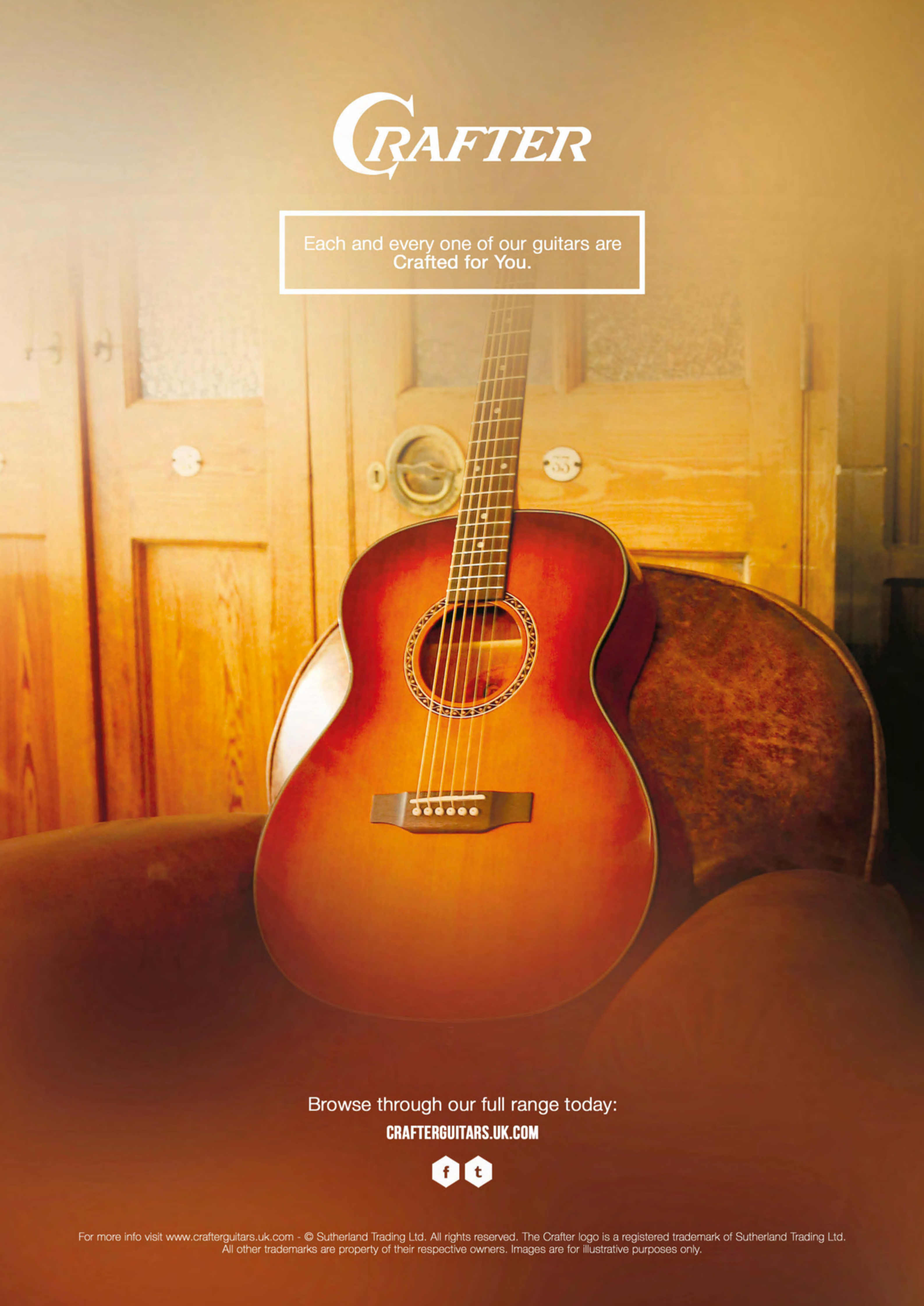

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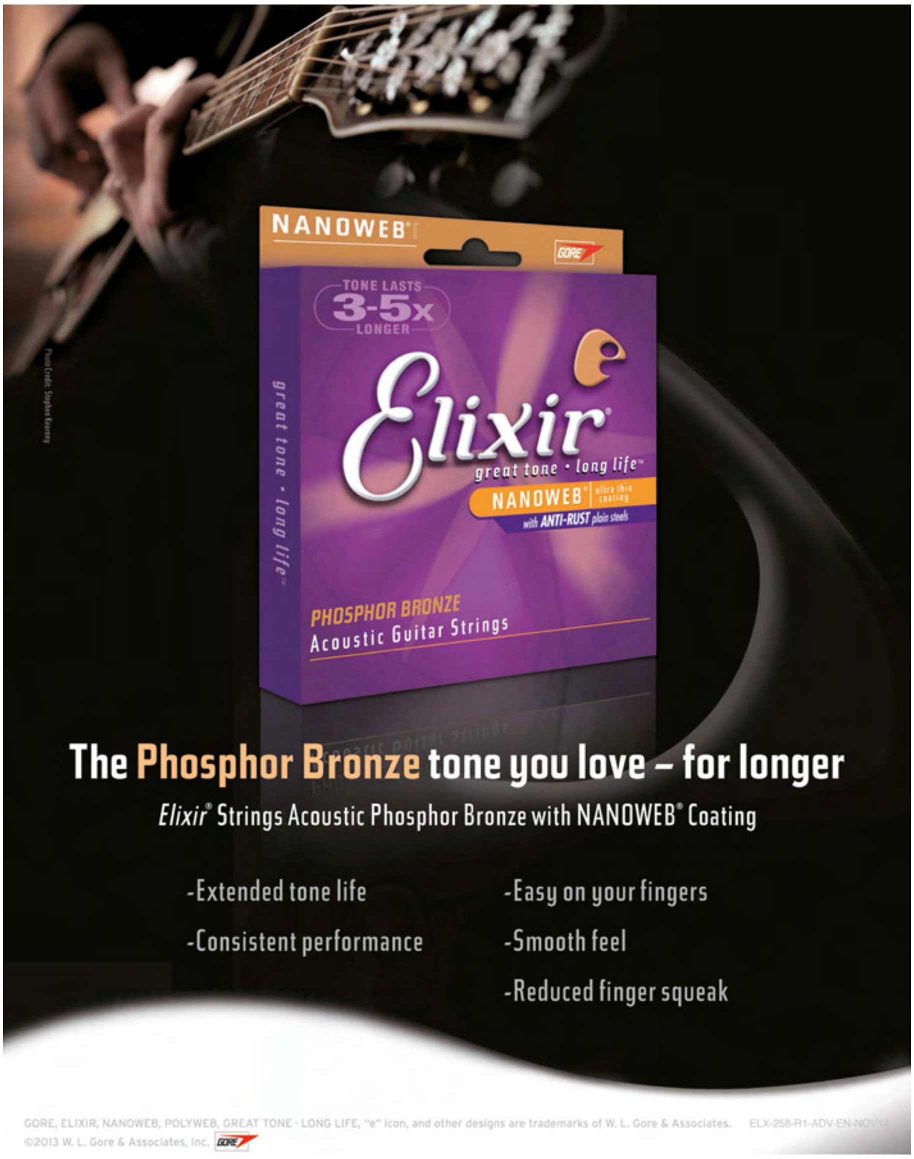

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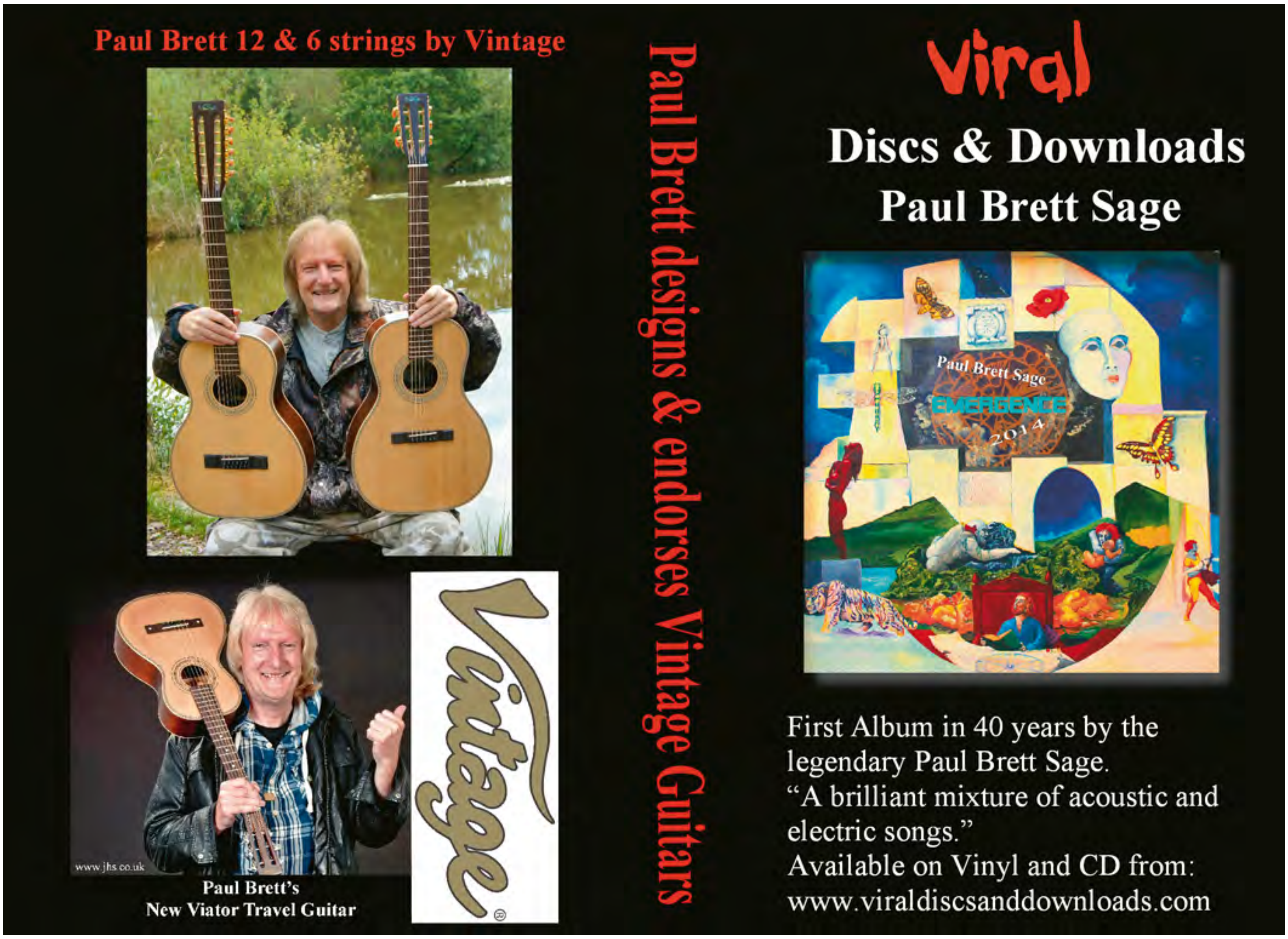

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PAVANA

LUIS MILÁN

RAYMOND BURLEY

Classical Guitarist

Raymond Burley is an accomplished classical guitarist, composer and arranger. One of his most recent projects was the album *Double Vision* – a collection of Giltrap pieces arranged for two guitars.

www.raymondburley.com

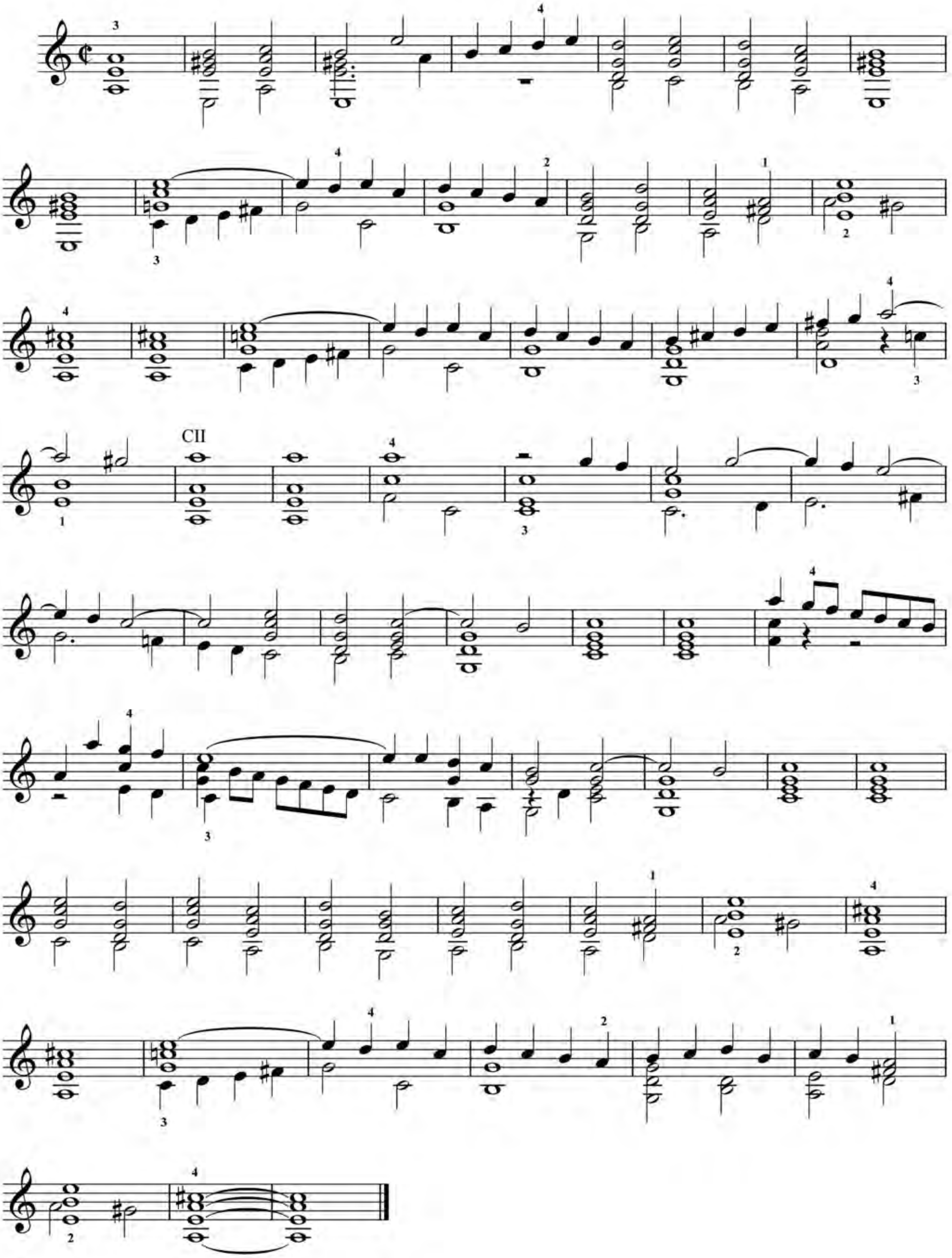
Firstly, I'd like to thank those of you who contacted me about the piece featured in my previous article, Bach's 'Prelude' from the *Prelude, Fugue and Allegro* BWV 998 - a wonderful piece from the high Baroque and a must-play item from the classical guitar repertory. Perhaps you might consider tackling the following two movements at some point. After all, the work should be thought of a single piece with sections, or movements, rather than three separate pieces.

I seem to remember the last piece I dealt with from the Renaissance was by the English lutenist and composer John Dowland. I'd like to take you through another piece from this period but this time from Spain. Despite the composer's name, he is most definitely Spanish. His dates are c.1500 - c.1561. It's thought he was born in Valencia and spent most of his life there. While many other musicians in Europe were playing, and writing for the lute and four course guitar, Milán played the vihuela. Over-simplifying perhaps, but the vihuela was a guitar-shaped instrument with Renaissance lute tuning. In 1536 Milán published what was to become his most important work: *Libro de Música de Vihuela de Mano*, otherwise known as *El Maestro*. It was the first published collection for the instrument and is still available in reprint today. Included in the volume are six pavanas - the one featured here is the first of the set. Unlike the earlier Dowland piece, I have not suggested using the original tuning, that is lowering the third string by a semitone, as in this piece there is no advantage in doing that; in fact, the original tuning makes the piece slightly more awkward to play. As with all music for plucked stringed instruments at this time, it was written in tablature and not notation. A pavana (also: pavan, pavane, pavin, paven) is a slow stately, processional dance, although Milán's piece is a dance in name only.

The choice of tempo must be yours; I suggest judging it from the quaver scales that appear in the fifth and sixth lines of the piece. If you have not encountered the split common time signature before, it indicates that the piece comprises two minim beats per bar. You'll notice the piece is in eight-bar sections throughout, each ending with a repeated chord. The potential technical obstacles include the chord passages; any piece involving a chord followed by another chord could be tricky although you'll find the majority of the chords here to be quite straightforward. Endeavour to place the left hand fingers as a unit. In bar 13, and elsewhere, you may find arriving at the second chord (D major) a little tricky; unfortunately there is no connecting shift from the previous chord. Shape the chord in mid-air and place the fingers simultaneously. The opening chord of the piece could be played using several different finger combinations; I suggest the second and third fingers as the second can remain on the E for the first three bars. Another technical (and indeed, musical) feature is the contrapuntal, or two-voice, section beginning towards the end of the fourth line. Be sure to give each note its full value before lifting the fingers – this also applies to the fingered tied notes, of course. In bar 11, you'll see that I have suggested releasing the low bass B a beat early – this makes connecting the bar with the next slightly easier. Try to avoid sounding the second string C sharp when playing the chords in bars 23 and 24; it sounds pleasant enough but it's not what's written.

Dynamic contrasts are your decision. I appreciate you're not playing it on the intended instrument but, like the lute and baroque guitar, the vihuela is a very quiet instrument so try to achieve the lightness of attack that Milán might have recognised.

Raymond Burley



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TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

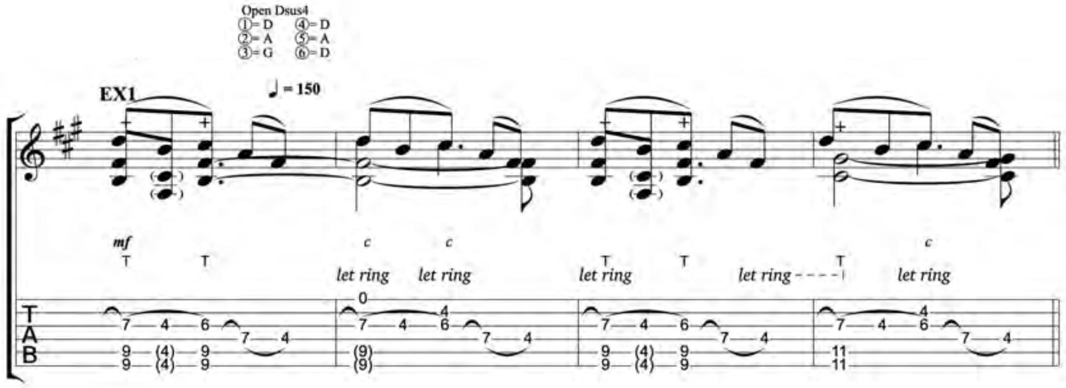
THE IMPOSSIBLE

PART 3 – PRE-CHORUS AND CHORUS

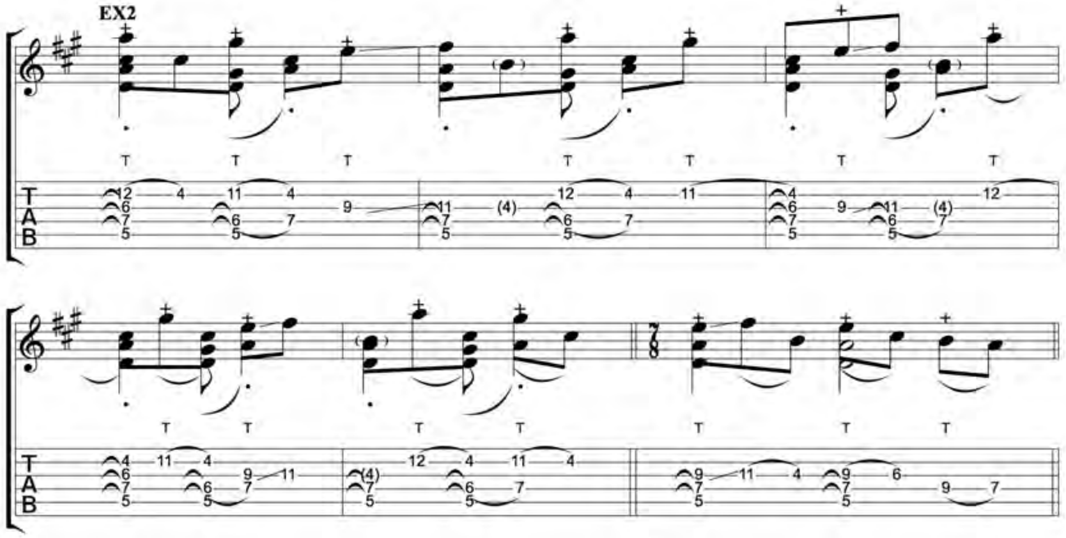
MIKE DAWES
Fingerstyle Virtuoso

Mike Dawes is an acclaimed globetrotter and wizard impersonator working with the Candyrat label. His solo work has seen him perform in all corners of the world and his studio CV includes sessions with the likes of Gotye and Newton Faulkner. He is also the right-hand axe man to Justin Hayward of the Moody Blues and is usually sat in some airport writing for the us here at *Acoustic* magazine.
www.mikedawes.com

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



I hope you have been getting on well with the previous sections of 'The Impossible'. For those of you who have missed the previous issues, you can get the back issues via your iPad or tablet. I will remind you that we are in DADGAD tuning with a partial capo on the fourth fret, leaving string one open. Remember that any partially capo'd note is illustrated as its true fret – for example, all tabbed fourth fret notes (except the top string) are played open, "fingered" by the capo. This month, we will be looking at the pre-chorus and chorus.

EXAMPLE 1

For the pre-chorus, we remain in our 5/8 rhythm and introduce a couple of tapped power chords in the bass register. The song's melodic hook remains identical in terms of fingering, however we have moved the pattern from strings four and five, to three and four. We also have three "open" (or partially capo'd) strings creating a top line: these are picked with C – the pinky of the picking hand.

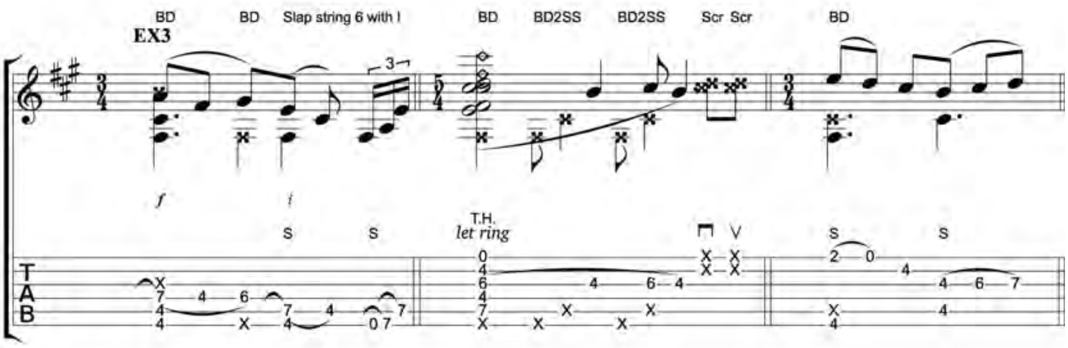
EXAMPLE 2

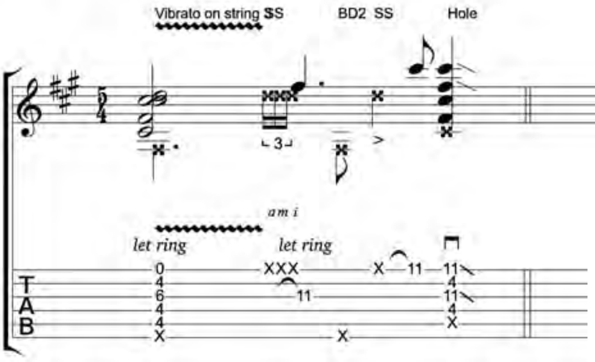
Here we encounter our first real polyrhythmic phrase of the piece. As I've mentioned in previous columns, 'The Impossible' is filled with polyrhythmic patterns – multiple time signatures, in this case two, performed simultaneously. Here we see a tapped pattern of seven beats in the melody, with a hammered pattern of five in the bass. This culminates in a short fill leading into the chorus...

EXAMPLE 3

The first four bars of the chorus are split into groups of 3/4 and 5/4. The percussion

EXAMPLE 3





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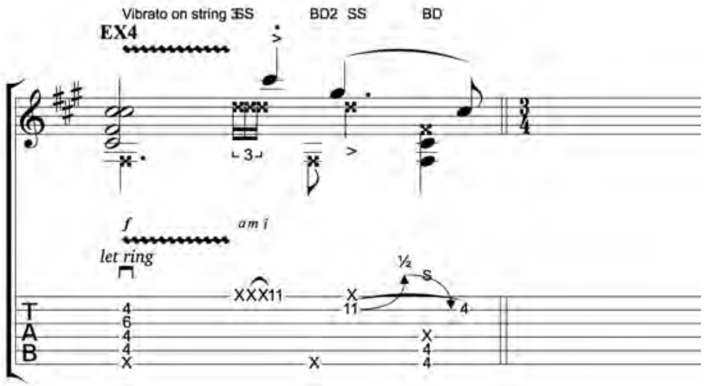
EXAMPLE 4



really kicks in here. You will need to refer to your percussion key from the previous column which can be found on the *Acoustic* website and in the digital edition. The one new addition to the key is: "Hole" – the act of strumming a chord and following through into the soundhole to create a click sound.

EXAMPLE 4

Once you are comfortable with these bars, you must repeat all but the last. This is replaced with a slight variation (that you can see in the examples) involving a 1/2 bend of string two and additional percussion.

EXAMPLE 5

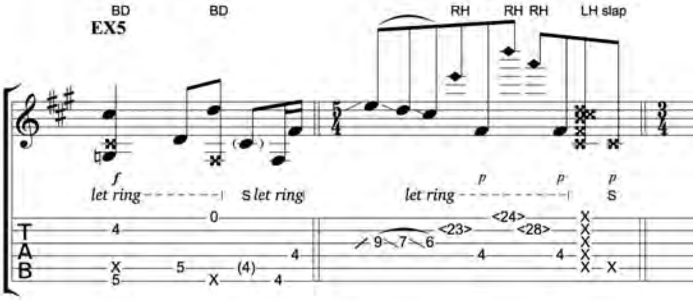
By now you should be eight bars into the 16-bar chorus. Once again, the first couple of bars are now repeated before the following two-bar variation is performed. Watch out for the right-hand harmonics picked over the soundhole as this will take a bit of practice to hit the required "sweet spot".

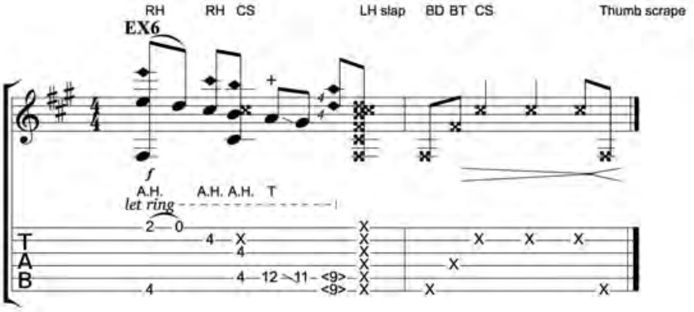
EXAMPLE 6

Finally, after once again repeating the original two bars of the chorus, we begin our final run. Here we combine playing behind the capo, artificial harmonics, open strings and natural harmonics to create a nice rounded descending pattern. The final bar of the section is completely percussive, with a dramatic scrape of the thumb, signaling the transition into verse two, which we will cover in the next issue. See you next time and, as always, please use the video in the digital edition as a guide.

Mike Dawes

EXAMPLE 5 & 6





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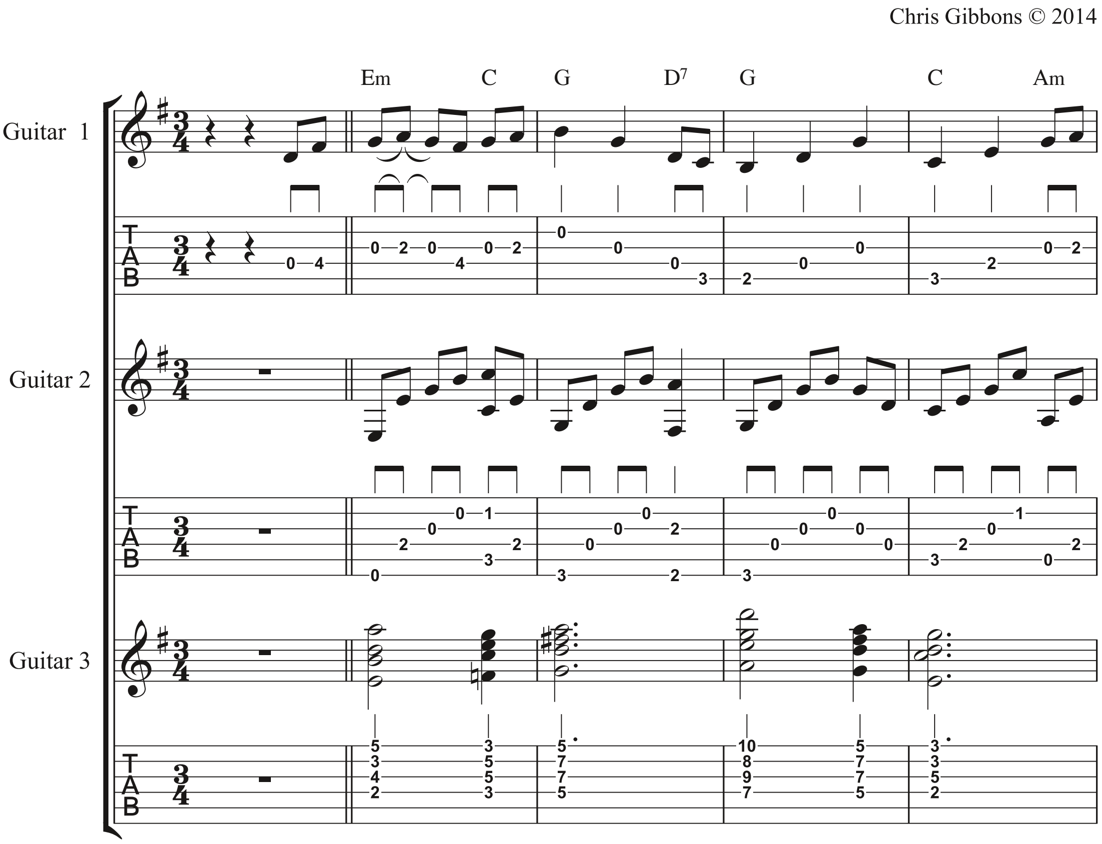
CHRIS GIBBONS
Composer

Chris is not only a guitar teacher but also a composer and producer who has worked on many orchestrations for television and recordings alike. He has many years of experience both in performance and helping others develop their playing potential to its best.
www.chrisgibbonsmusic.co.uk

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

TWIG DANCE

A STUDY OF STACKED CHORDS



In this month's issue we are applying some of the theoretical studies learned over the past few issues on stacked chords. If you missed these tutorials, you can find them in back issues and online.

To recap: composers and arrangers often use a "chord-over-a-chord" method of expressing extended chords. A simple chord contains the root, third and fifth notes of the scale; an extended chord extends this sequence to include the seventh, ninth, eleventh, and so on.

Here's a simple example of how this works; an E minor chord is made up of the notes E, G and B. An E minor ninth chord extends this sequence to include D (the seventh) and F# (the ninth). The extended chord is thus: E, G, B, D, F#. A B minor chord is B, D and F#. Therefore, the Em9 chord can be expressed as Bm/Em. To improvise over an Em9 chord, one can interlock the E minor and B minor scales to achieve the Em9 tonality.

Any guitarists who now use looping pedals to layer textures can create chord passages over which improvisations can easily be formed.

This is essentially "arranging on the fly" and one's theoretical knowledge and musical intuition can reap large rewards in constructing the most imaginative loops.

In fact, certain musical forms using fairly short formats – eight, 12 and 16 bars as you would find in traditional folk music – provides an excellent base for looping performances and a platform for applying the stacked chord principles outlined here and featured in previous issues.

So the performance piece this month is 'Twig Dance' – an arrangement with three guitar parts.

Part one is the melody; a simple traditional-style folk melody in 3/4 time.

Please use as many hammer-ons and pull-offs as you see fit, it always gives the piece a lift and is most suitable for the style we are playing in. Pay attention to the fingering at bar seven where the open strings should be allowed to chime against the fretted notes.

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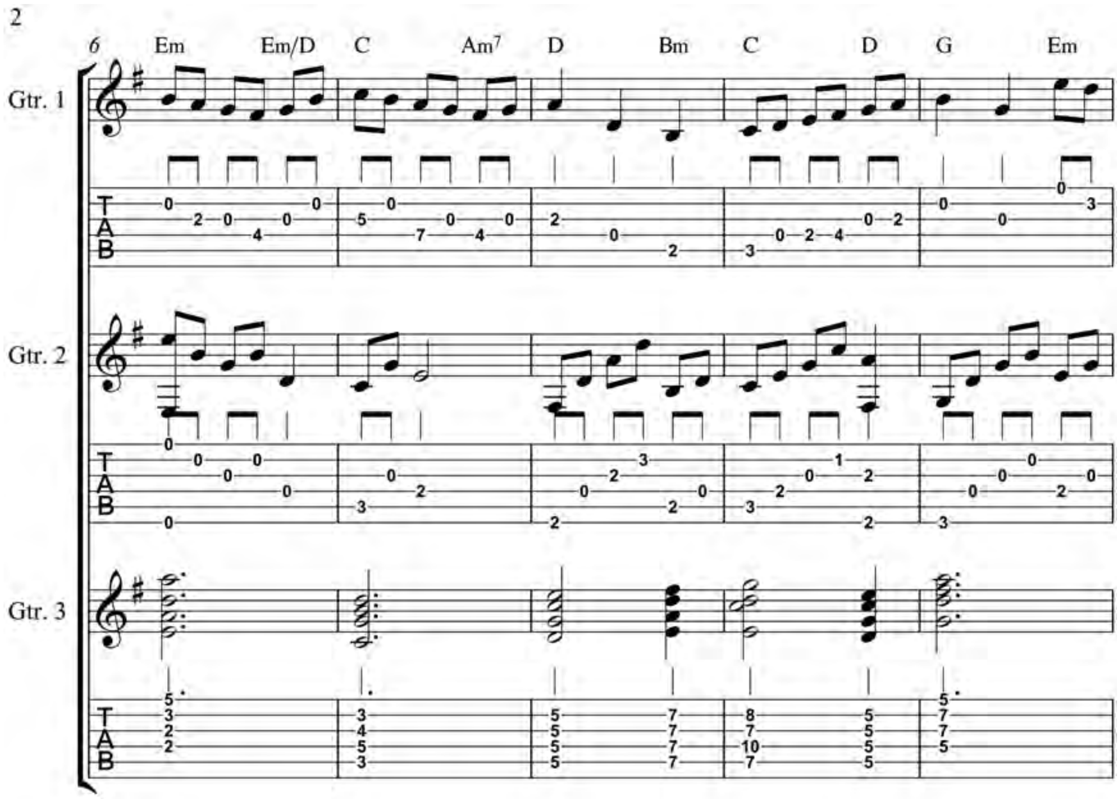

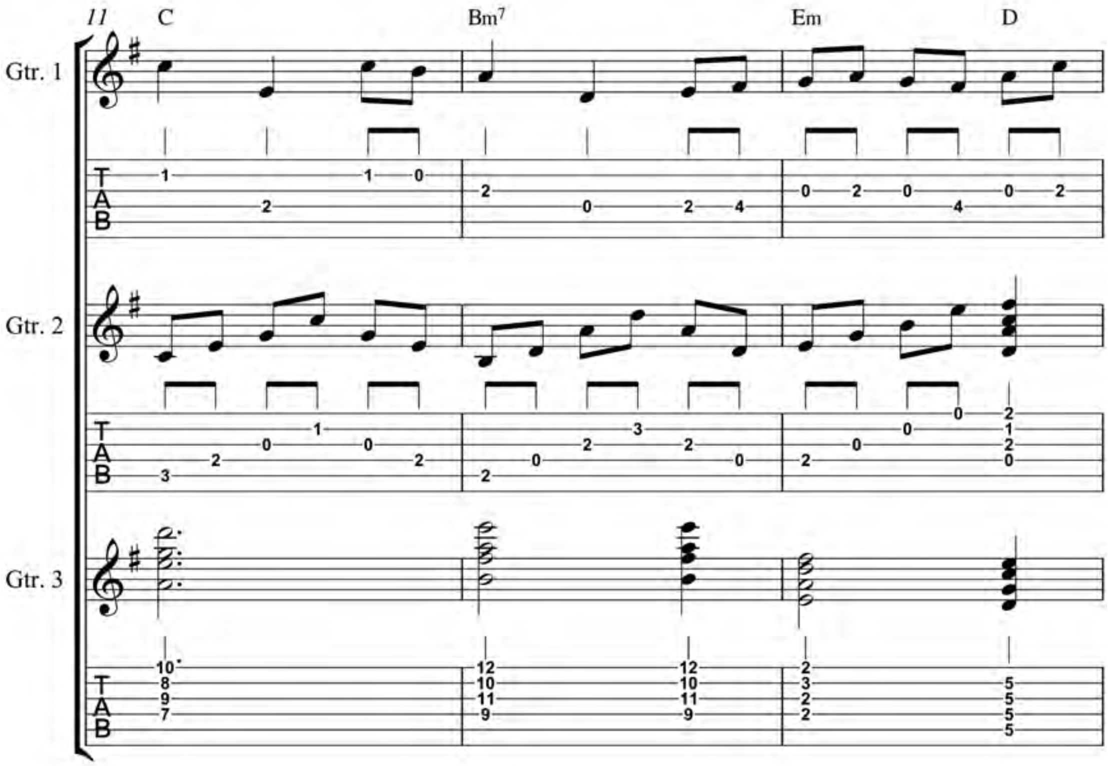

scheme for the chord accompaniment; or if you wish, just strum the chords written in symbol form above **part one**.

Part three is the stacked chord alternate chords to be played to add texture to **parts one** and **two**.

When using the looping pedal, first record the chords, strummed or picked. Then add in the alternate chords in **part two.** Here you can really appreciate how the stacked chord-style voices work in conjunction with the original chord sequence.

You may improvise over the chords in the tablature without recording the melody of **part one**, or just simply play the melody as part of the live performance.

If there are combinations of chords and extended/ stacked chords which you really like, please experiment with them in different styles and tempos in order to create original and unique textures. Every performance piece you learn can be a gateway to original and exiting new music of your own.

Chris Gibbons

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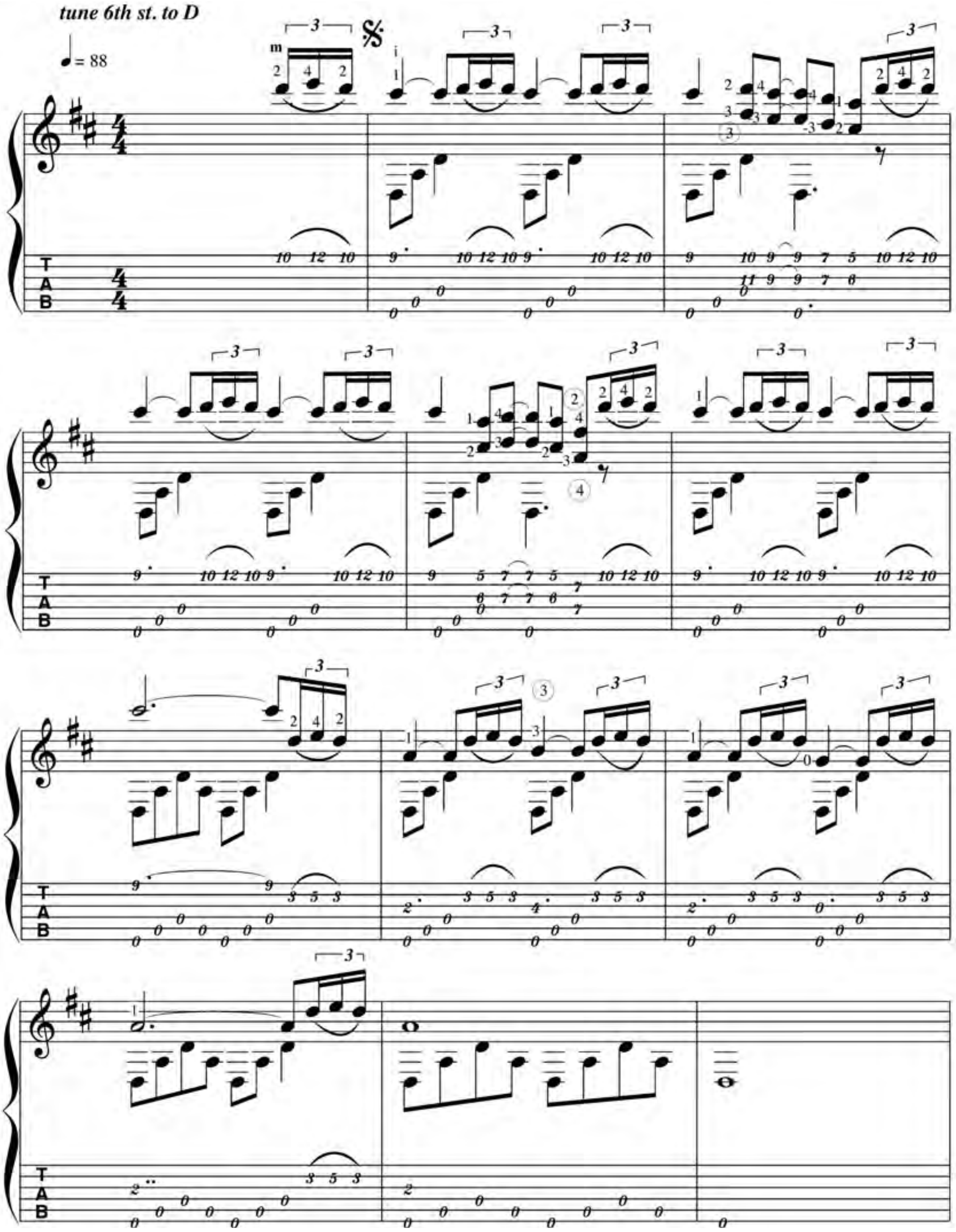
TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

TRIGGER THE DIGGER

DIGGING UP AN ORIGINAL TUNE



Mining for gold, or anything else for that matter, often involves some form of digging. The same can metaphorically apply to your own personal attempts to create or dig up an original tune, which often starts with a simple riff, a melody, rhythm or groove; perhaps a vibe or visual spark.

Call it what you want, but any way you look at a tune's humble beginning, it's still the root. Even if this initial base for a tune winds up on the cutting room floor and is never used in the final version, it can and still be respectfully viewed as the nudge that started you on course.

The genuine creative process is also one of the most elusive aspects of music. It can be interpreted as frustrating or joyous. Sometimes in the case

of an individual suffering from writer's block, it is an entrance into the world of insanity as the mind runs screaming like a scalded ape from further attempts as it realises in the most uncomfortable sense, "Hey, maybe I have nothing to offer."

This condition doesn't make someone a bad person or should be interpreted as a judgment or to place a value on an individual if they cannot or choose not to be a member of the creative team the world and generations have to offer. Maybe some folks aren't meant to be creative artists. Some can wind up teaching, interpreting and deciphering, sharing in a performance or jamming, as a trigger to their future creations.

I have had students on occasion give me the undeniable impression that they simply should just never perform in public. I've discussed this with them openly and honestly and there seems to be quite a profound sense of relief when they realize, "Hey, wow – I'm in the clear. I don't have to play for anyone but myself and my dog's squeaky toys."

My own teacher David Walbert, a master musician, guitarist, player, composer, arranger – the list goes on – appears, as far as I've always been able to tell, to have very little interest in performing concerts or entering the world of the recording artist. His passion seems to be of the most pure sense which is exclusively for his own personal journey of playing, composing, arranging – wait I just said that – but I believe it's true.

Fortunately, he also has a very strong passion to be a teacher and share everything he knows about music and the guitar with students of all ages and levels (although rumor has it that he did once pull an ice pick out on a student for keeping their plucking thumb too high).

In my own guitar journey, similar to one of my guitar inspirations and heroes John Fahey, I'm always making stuff up. Why? It is fun and seems to have always been part of my calling. The kiss of death for my own creations is almost always when I fall prey to the stare and compare game as I subconsciously put my own creation up against others floating around out there.

As I've always said, I don't recall the guitar currently being an olympic sport, although many try to treat it that way. But, if I did, I think my plucky-ducky, wuck-wuck, skiffle-piffle tune would go down in flames when compared to J.S. Bach's 'Chaconne'. So I fiddle, plunk, pluck and noodle around allowing myself to enjoy the process and sometimes a tune comes to me through trial and error efforts; a feeling I get from the melody, groove or vibe of another tune, often not stemming from the guitar, or I might apply a little bit of theory to consider a move.

Moving back to David Walbert... I've selected the opening segment of one of his original pieces, 'Prelude No. 1' as an example of what can be done with a simple melody when voiced in two locations as an extension of the original motif which begins as a melodic and continually embedded triplet within a sixteenth note framework.

The plucking thumb needs to stay soft and steady without pronounced pounding of the base notes. Layer it underneath the melody quietly and as a deep and soft low-end fill as the melody almost seems to dance above it.

Be sure to arch your fingertips up on your fretting hand for a good secure angle to employ the rapid hammer-on / pull-off. Without intending to get too ethereal here, perhaps think of birds singing the melody.

Watch how the main melody is moved from the first to the second string for its new voicing. Similar to blues, although this is more of a classical sounding piece by nature, this voice movement is very reminiscent of the standard and common practice in the blues of call and response.

Best of luck with the tune, try it slowly with very small fragments played against a metronome, perhaps try it with a capo at the second fret, and be sure to remember to tune your low string from an E down to a D.

Now steering you back to the creative process and your own journey into creations, a famous comedian used to say during one of his many impressions, "Can you dig it? I knew that you could." So get up, down, sideways or out there, but dig up a tune, make it your own, and continue or begin the journey to find your own creative musical voice.

Richard Gilewitz

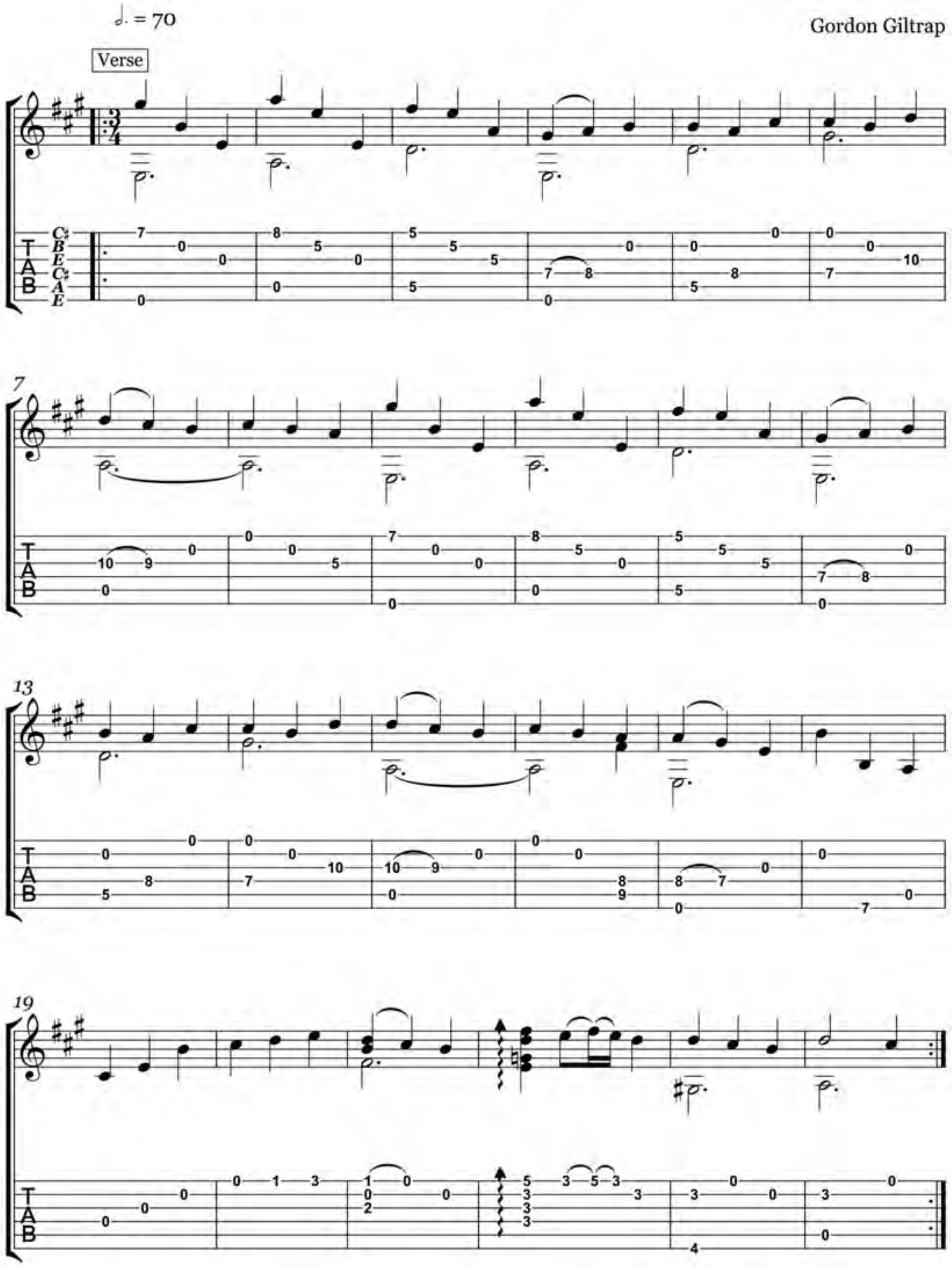
GORDON GILTRAP
Instrumental Artist

Gordon Giltrap is pioneer of acoustic music in the UK. His extensive discography gives evidence of a skilled musician whose expertise lay in composition and arrangement. His pieces are played and enjoyed by young and old alike.
www.giltrap.co.uk

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

TEARS OF JOY

A JUBILANT PIECE CELEBRATING AN ASTONISHING ACHIEVEMENT



This piece was written to celebrate Dame Ellen MacArthur's incredible seafaring achievement. I can still remember watching her return to these shores on TV, and the commentator saying that there were "tears of joy in the eyes of the crowd as they welcomed her home".

The tuning of EAC#EBC# was first used many years ago for my tune 'Elegy' taken from *The Brotherhood Suite*. How I stumbled upon it, I really don't know, but since that time I have written three pieces in this tuning. This one is probably the most challenging of them all.

Let us be clear on the tuning. The low A and E remain the same, you then tune down the fourth string a semitone for the C#. The

third string goes down to E, the B remains the same and the top E goes down to C#.

The tempo of the track is 70, which gives us a steady lilting 3/4 time but, like anything new, it's best to take it at an even slower tempo because when you reach bar 65, letter B, I can assure you that things start to become a lot more challenging.

Bars 65 to 76 are without a doubt the toughest part of the whole piece – the repeat marks help to mentally divide this section up in to two halves.

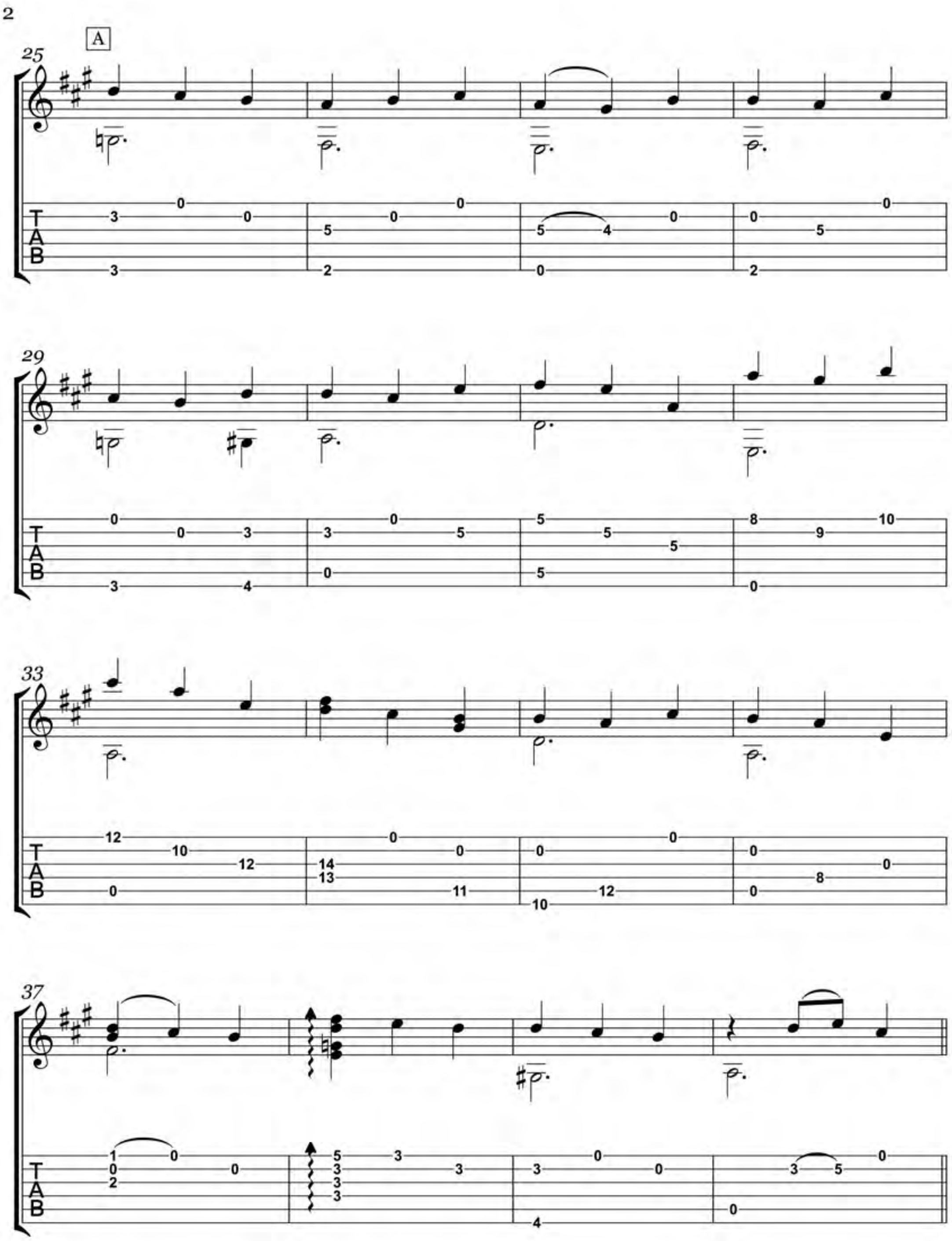
'Tears of Joy' is a forward-moving piece yet quite relentless – but, in my mind, it's a joyful piece celebrating an astonishing achievement by a truly remarkable human being – and I love to play this.

Moving back to bar 25; many people have likened this to an ascending Bach progression, which I have taken as a compliment! Bar 34 can be a little tight in execution above the twelfth fret where you have frets 13 and 14 covering the third and fourth strings. Things lighten up a bit on the chordal section at bar 101.

So there you have it, fellow pickers. Work on each section slowly, and take from the piece whatever you will, and hopefully parts of it will inspire you and get you thinking in a slightly different way about fluidity of playing with hammers and pulls.

This old tune has become a firm favourite in my solo concerts and in duo format with that maestro of the classical guitar and fellow columnist, Raymond Burley. Ray has recorded a cracking version of this piece on his album *The Long Road Home* in standard tuning – I don't know how he does it! Also, it's on my *Shining Morn* album, and the *Double Vision* album with Ray. Have fun and see you next time for some more obscure tunings.

Gordon Giltrap



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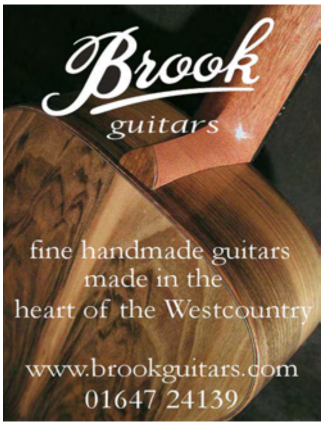

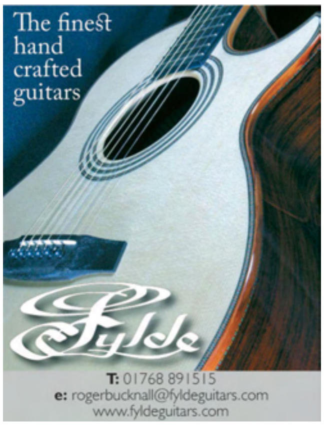

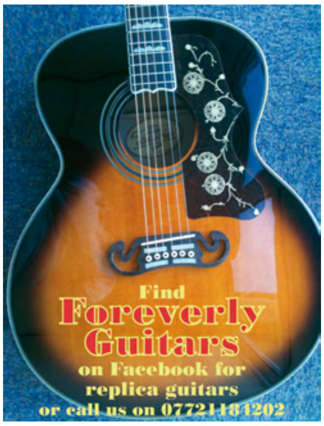

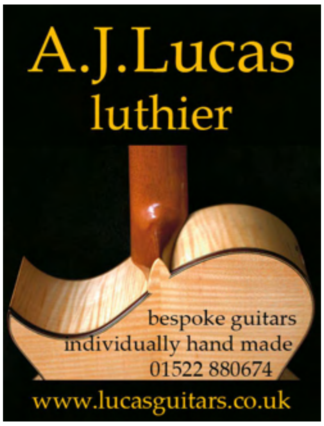

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LEGENDS

Michael Hedges

WORDS: TERI SACCONE

Just as Jimi Hendrix revolutionised the electric guitar via his broad imagination and bold execution, Michael Hedges had a similar impact on acoustic guitarists with his ground-breaking technique, changing how the acoustic guitar is played and perceived by many. He creatively employed harmonics and picking techniques to create the impression of multiple guitars playing simultaneously, and has influenced many of the "new wave" of percussive acoustic guitarists. Although he reputedly detested being pigeonholed into a genre or style, Hedges was a self-described "violent acoustic" player.

Born in Sacramento, California, in 1953, Hedges was accomplished enough to gain entry into the prestigious Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland; he also obtained a degree in classical composition after studying classical guitar at Stanford University in the Bay Area. His professional career began while performing in nearby Palo Alto when he was spotted by Windham Hill label founder Will Ackerman, who quickly signed him to a contract; Hedges' debut LP, *Breakfast In The Field*, appeared in 1981 and quickly caught on with guitar aficionados.

Some of the pioneering approaches he helped bring to the acoustic guitar in a very modern context was his use of hammer-ons, pull-offs, harmonic slaps, alternate tunings, and the incorporation of percussive elements which would latterly influence many generations of guitar players. Furthermore, Hedges pulled bass lines, lead lines, moving chords and percussion parts simultaneously out of just one guitar (live these were dubbed his "man-band" performances), using a custom-made double neck guitar. As a guitar player, Hedges was a master. Nevertheless, the music he composed was lush, visceral, and

deceptively playful (he humorously inserted the lick from the classic Iron Butterfly track 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida' into an otherwise straightforward song).

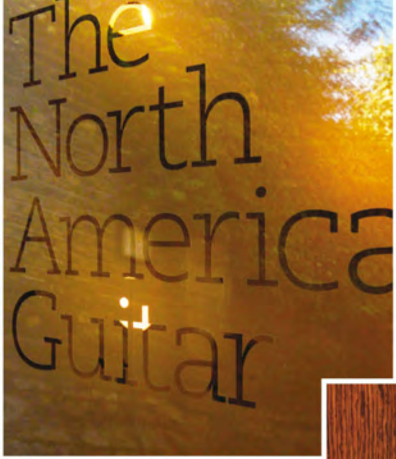
Over the following couple of years, Hedges' reputation expanded as his two-handed tapping style of soloing became increasingly polished. His second album *Aerial Boundaries* is considered by many to be his finest as it sonically seems unbelievable that so much glorious music is pouring out of just Hedges and one guitar – his playing on that album is haunting, eloquent, yet delivered with the force of a madman. Although his technique has been analysed by many, it should be noted that his compositional brilliance came to the fore on *Aerial Boundaries*. Many consider the album, with its inventiveness and hypnotic nature, to be one of the very finest acoustic albums ever made. Despite exploiting electronics in places with *Aerial Boundaries*, Hedges made it clear that all the sounds originated from the humble acoustic guitar.

Hedges followed *Aerial Boundaries* with *Watching My Life Go By* – his first recording to feature himself on vocals as well as guitar duties after two instrumental albums. Hedges as a singer-songwriter was less successful than previous incarnations and *Watching My Life Go By* was palpably more reserved than his prior output – but Hedges sought to grow as an artist, which is always a risk.

Next up, he released *Live On The Double Planet* in 1987, featuring a couple of songs performed on the harp guitar, and the album, culled from some choice live shows, only served to highlight the incredible use of Hedges' right-hand technique, maintaining immaculate timekeeping as sole accompaniment to his strong vocal work and splendid soloing. 1990's *Taproot* is another excellent display of both Hedges' technique and compositional gifts, but *Taproot* also contains inherent emotional appeal. The record was Hedges' last for several years, until he came back in 1994 with *The Road To Return*, where his sound was altered somewhat as his vocals were now ubiquitous and in addition to acoustic guitar, he played flute, drums, synthesizer, harmonica, and electric guitar. Of course, when a musician of such stature steps out of his comfort zone, many hardcore fans feel less than enthusiastic, but Hedges was always pushing his own limits despite his fans' expectations.

1996's *Oracle* proved to be a return to predominantly acoustic-based performances gaining him a posthumous Grammy Award for Best New Age Album in 1998. Sadly, the record was the last to be issued during Hedges' lifetime. On December 2, 1997, his body was found near the wreckage of his car accident just outside of Mendocino, California. Hedges was just 43 at the time of his death, and during his career he worked with a variety of artists such as Jerry Garcia, Crosby, Stills & Nash, the Cure, and Beautiful South. Posthumous releases followed his passing, as Hedges was a prolific musician both live and in the studio.

Ultimately, Hedges exceptional music stands up over time remaining incredibly well-regarded and an inspiration to anyone who picks up an acoustic guitar wishing to challenge the traditional conventions of the instrument. ■



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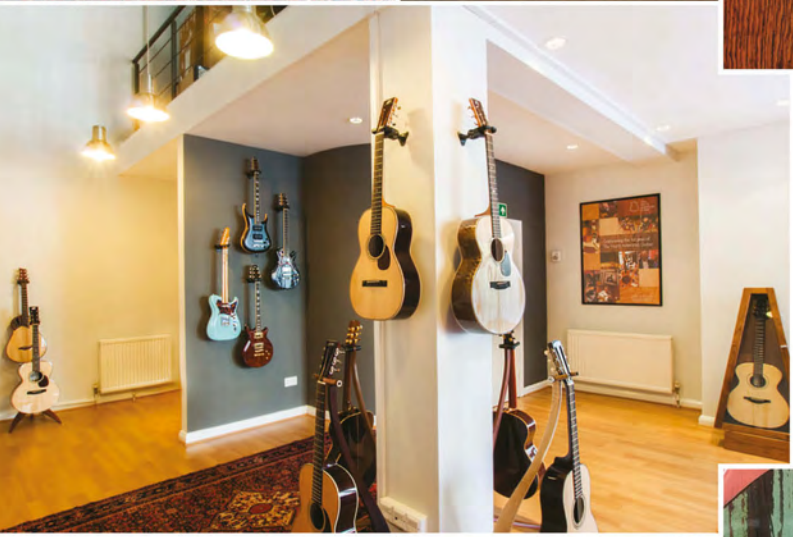

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